

Foreword Review

Nature's Allies

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Featuring short but detailed biographies, *Nature's Allies* elevates past and present icons of the environmentalist movement.

From John Muir to Wangari Muta Maati, this book covers major environmental figures roughly chronologically from the mid-1800s to the present day. In doing so, it initially focuses on the US but transitions to a wider world perspective about halfway through. The ethnic and gender diversity of the subjects is a major factor in the book's favor. Though the largest percentage of the subjects are still white Americans, this work represents a step in the direction of correcting the erasure of non-white, non-American environmentalism from mainstream American dialogue. The message, one that Americans may not often hear, is that environmentalism is universal and global in scope. *Nature's Allies* seems targeted toward Americans, specifically, and could function as a consciousness-broadening tool for activists and students who are unfamiliar with the names of Billy Frank and Chico Mendes.

The book is brief in length, and some profiles are more engaging than others. Occasionally, as in the case of John Muir, the bios nearly become odes. Even with characters who, like Aldo Leopold, might have considered themselves pragmatic people, the author goes out of his way to highlight their idealism and moral bravery. He attempts a tricky balancing act in addressing the practical concerns faced by these eight individuals while at the same time focusing on their environmental pursuits—all in under three hundred pages—and if he occasionally tips into enthusiasm or glosses over a rough patch, that may be forgivable. Regardless, the notes are thorough and include a bevy of references for follow-up.

Students would take well to *Nature's Allies*, especially teenagers and college freshmen considering entry into environmental studies. It could also function well as a popular introduction to environmental heroes who aren't necessarily household names, including Ding Darling and Gro Harlem Brundtland.

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