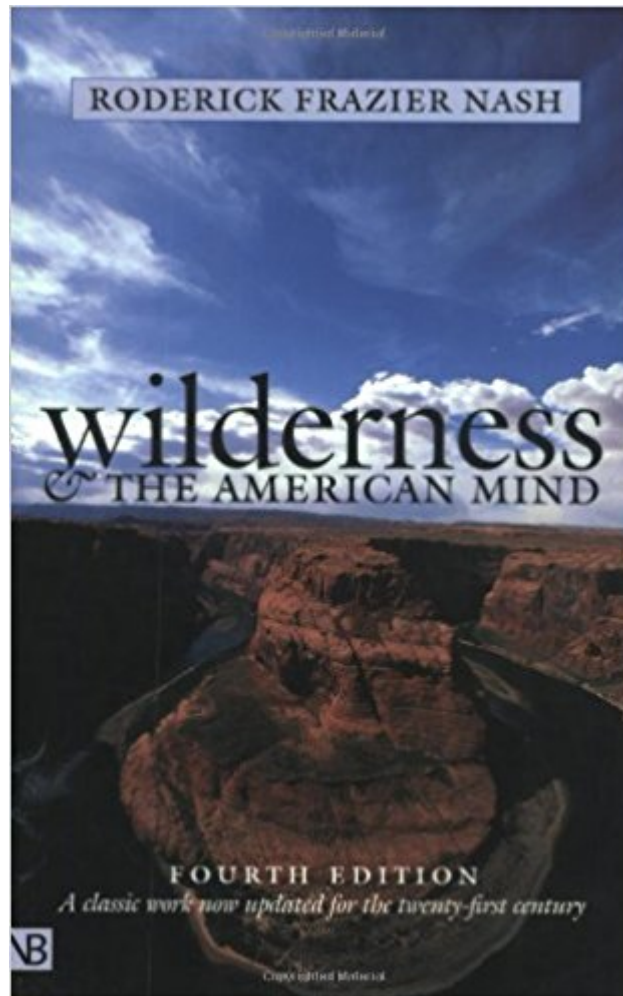




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Wilderness And The American Mind



Synopsis

Roderick Nash's classic study of America's changing attitudes toward wilderness has received wide acclaim since its initial publication in 1967. The Los Angeles Times has listed it among the one hundred most influential books published in the last quarter century, Outside Magazine has included it in a survey of "books that changed our world", and it has been called the "Book of Genesis for environmentalists". Now a fourth edition of this highly regarded work is available, with a new preface and epilogue in which Nash explores the future of wilderness and reflects on its ethical and biocentric relevance.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"A peerless work and irreplaceable for everyone who cares for Nature." -- Dave Foreman, Chairman, Wildlands Project
"One of those rare works that combines exemplary scholarship with readability." -- Washington Post Book World

Roderick Frazier Nash is professor emeritus of history and environmental studies at the University of California Santa Barbara.

I love this book. The author uses the historical timeline to present an excellent overview of major cultural forces that shaped the relationship American citizens have with wilderness today. The past does influence the present and future. When we understand where our beliefs came from we are

better able to make informed decisions about our present and future.

Nash chronicles American attitudes toward their country's wild places in hopes of answering the big question: What role does thou unspoiled, unaltered, natural place serve in our society? As I read *Wilderness & the American Mind*, I found not only is this answer politically & emotionally charged as say the question of creation versus evolution, but the answer changes depending on where and when you ask it. The book masterfully depicts the dramatic periods of change in the American psyche about nature and wild places. Nash brings all the reference and research of a disciplined historian to bear, but always manages to keep you interested. He creates an engaging read by calling on the most influential players and the most controversial settings of the American "environmental movement." We get treated to chapters on Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, Aldo Leopold along with a supporting cast of characters like Teddy Roosevelt, Edward Abbey, and David Brower (Oh, let's not forgot the feds.) The settings, just as tasty, depict the epic battles for preserving Little Yosemite Valley (aka Hetch Hetchy), the Colorado River, and of course, the congressional battle to preserve a major chunk of Alaskan wilderness from development. After I read this book, I noticed all the pages I dog-eared; this book is bejeweled with great quotes! Nash brings us the thought-shapers, but gives them their voice. I'll leave you with one of many outstanding quotes. This one compliments of Aldo Leopold: "Shallow-minded modern man... who prates of empires, political and economic" lacked the humility to perceive this truth. "It is only the scholar who appreciates that all history consists of successive excursions from a single starting-point, to which man returns again and again to organize yet another search for a durable scale of values." This initial bedrock was "raw wilderness." To possess it he thought, but most importantly to understand it ecologically as well as aesthetically, was the key to health--of land and also of culture.

An amazing look at the history of American environmental thought.

Really fascinating historical look at the ways Americans think and have thought about "the wilderness."

Great book. This was the main text used for a wilderness and human values class I took in college and I was happy to read it. Anyone who appreciates the wilderness and wildness of the US should take the time to read this.

Well, the book was well used. With notes but I know that when I bought it.

This book (still reading) has been good so far, and I can't stop reading it, so it must be good right? Anyway, it delves into the average mindset of modern day American thought about our wilderness, and now I know why our country is doomed to repeat what others already have.

While not a perfect book, this is one of the few books I know which I would call "required reading" for people in the environmental movement and ecology. It's not a science book, which is one of my minor problems with it, but I titled this review comment with my opinion prior to taking the first of 2 classes (1974) by one of Nash's student colleagues and then Nash himself. I, and a slew of my colleagues in 1970 really needed to have read this during the organization and preparation for what was then termed "The First Environmental Teach-In" now called ridiculously "Earth Day." I felt this way in 1974, because I could see that we had retrod ground done by Brower 2 decades earlier and Muir seven decades. And then I learned of names I had never heard before like G. Pinchot and the roles of people like John Wesley Powell independent of the Grand Canyon survey and Stephen Mather and the Natl. Park PR machine (not all bad). This book is part of why students are supposed to take history classes. The 2nd ed (pub. 1973), which I had and still have, covered events I lived and can confirmed happened. That's toward the end of the book. The beginning of the book are about pre-American precursors in Europe such as the Romantic movement and various humanist issues like painting and writing. Some of these parts were were a little slow for me (I did read Rousseau), but it did put the Black Forest in perspective more than a type of cake. And that helps with understanding forestry schools. Nash is good in showing the development of the conservation movement (incl. soil reclamation and forestry [and why hunters and fishers are conservationists]) to the shortcoming of conservation and the start of preservation (Muir, Mather), and the latter shortcomings of "loving wilderness to death" and the rise of environmentalism and ecological biology (Nash likes Leopold, I prefer Rachel Carson, we agree on reading Ed Abbey). Rod is good at tying together art, literature (here your transcendentalists in American Literature come in), popular culture (recreation), religion (See his Rights of Nature book for more depth), and science (barely). He has a good bibliography, one of the finest that I have seen if you want more depth and references, but the field is pretty vast and Nash's text is already thick so his survey is at best described as shallow (supplementary reading like Doug Strong's The Conservationists helps). Alaska in the 3rd ed. is important to the future. I have been given by Rod in the past "seed" copies, and I purchase "Wilderness" as gifts. I stopped doing that until recently when I was

surprised a bio prof friend was unaware. I know he will enjoy reading "Would you flood the Sistine Chapel to get closer to the ceiling?" I wish that Gaylord Nelson (then Sen., Wisc.) had had us read this book. I think that we would have gone further on that day in 1970. The book is just a shadow of the class experience, I leave lots of book detail out in this review/summary.

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