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Restoring Nature: Perspectives from the Social Sciences and Humanities. Edited by Paul H. Gobster & R. Bruce Hull. Washington, DC: Island Press, 2000. Pp. 321. $50.00 cloth, $25.00 paper.

The nineteen contributors to *Restoring Nature* include four researchers for the USDA Forest Service, an architect, a journal editor, a community planner, and a dozen university professors. They represent a wide range of expertise and experience in ecological restoration, an area that has received very little attention from the intellectuals and activists of the environmental movement here and abroad. Indeed, the reference lists appended to most of the chapters make it very clear how small the literature on restoration is. By bringing together key contributors to this literature, as well as individuals with extensive restoration experience in varying capacities, the volume fills a notable gap in the field of environmental studies.

The volume emerged, however, as a direct response to a perceived community need rather than as an attempt to plug a gap in the academic literature. In 1996, Paul Gobster and others at the North Central Research Station of the Forest Service found themselves at the center of a spirited debate over a Natural Areas Management Program. This particular program had been designed to restore 7000 acres of forest cover around Chicago to the oak savanna and tallgrass prairie that had existed prior to European settlement. Strong opposition from the community surprised restoration specialists who had conceived of the project as a wonderful opportunity to recover an ecological heritage that had largely been displaced by some two centuries of urban development. Faced with angry headlines such as "Half Million Trees May Face Ax: DuPage Clears Forest Land to Create Prairies," it became evident that an extended discussion with the people of the Chicago region was necessary.

Gobster felt that the Forest Service had a special obligation to provide input into this discussion that went far beyond issuing statements explaining his office's position. To help assemble extensive, useful information, he organized six panels around the theme of "The Restoration and Management of Nature" for the 1998 International Symposium on Society and Resource Management. The chapters included in this volume are, for the most part, reworkings of papers presented at the 1998 meetings.

These papers have been organized by the editors into four sections. The first section brings together a group of environmental philosophers who provide a context for thinking about restoration that links it to fundamental debates that will be familiar, in some formulation, to many environmentalists. William R. Jordan III opens this section by laying out a problem that serves as a unifying theme throughout the volume. The problem has to do with the apparent contradiction between the widely

expressed desire to regard nature as a community to which we belong, and which requires us to act in certain ways, and the equally prominent desire to isolate nature as much as possible from any human contact. Environmentalism's endorsement of ecologically sound, sustainable communities seems, Jordan contends, at odds with its equally energetic attempts to preserve and assign intrinsic, non-human value to wilderness.

From some intellectual and practical perspectives, this contradiction might not be as significant as Jordan suggests. At least some environmentalists are content with assigning very different objectives to the remote regions of Alaska, on the one hand, and densely populated Southern California, on the other. In any case, Jordan's chapter does lay the groundwork for the very structured debate between Eric Katz and Andrew Light that follows. For Katz, the claim that we can restore nature is a "big lie." Once we have intervened in nature, it is compromised; it becomes an artifact of human ingenuity that stands in sharp contrast, at least ontologically, to the natural creations of non-human forces. To pretend otherwise is dangerous because it fosters the impression that with the right know how we can recreate or restore virtually anything. If this is true, that is, if we believe we can always restore nature, then what prevents us from modifying it in any way we want whenever we feel we can derive benefit from doing so? Katz's big lie is an archetypal lie. The truth is this: once innocence is violated, once the pure is tainted, once the original artwork has been destroyed, it is gone forever. So, too, with nature.

Katz's argument might be the most compelling argument in the book. In the chapter that follows, Andrew Light agrees with it at an abstract level but raises questions about its practical value. Light makes an important argument that has surfaced recently in discussions about sustainable development. This argument is premised on the belief that environmental philosophers have a responsibility to contribute to the resolution of real world problems. From Light's perspective, in many situations restoration offers clear benefits over doing nothing, including the benefit of reconnecting people to the community of nature. Identifying these situations, establishing guidelines, encouraging discussion resonant with people's experiences, beliefs, and values—these are the things Light would like to see environmental philosophers engage in.

This section concludes with a chapter by Cheryl Foster that makes an initial attempt to do precisely this. Foster's interest is in identifying those restorations that provide the sort of value Light has described. She believes they might be ascertained by examining the narrative (what has happened here) and ambient (what one feels here) value properties of a given patch of nature. But Foster also echoes some of Katz's concerns in her comments on the threats posed by a culture that increasingly accepts hyperreality (copies) as reality. Those who follow developments in the computer industry will understand exactly what she means.

The second section of the book includes four chapters focused explicitly on the issue raised by Light and Foster: how should a community decide what to restore and how to restore it? This section has a distinctly post-modern character—its authors worry about the contested nature of language and the links between truth claims and power. Bruce Hull and David Robertson begin by identifying terms that might serve as the basis for restoration guidelines—naturalness, health, integrity—but go on to show that the meanings of these terms are not and cannot be fixed. Their recommendation is to acknowledge the normative aspects of knowledge, and work towards decision-making processes that are open and inclusive.

Reid Helford presents a case study of the Chicago controversy that demonstrates how restoration specialists acted to silence or discredit alternative views by representing themselves as both experts and activists. The implication is that they deserve a privileged status because they know nature and they are committed to its well-being. Joanne Vining and Elizabeth Tyler add a psychological perspective to this line of analysis. Their case study of the Chicago project shows that alternative positions were linked to different values, opinions, and emotions. The key to success, they believe, is to search for the compromises to which, according to their research, most people are amenable. This section ends with a second chapter by Light, who makes a solid argument against professionalization in the restoration field. Light's concern is that once credentials are established and people become certified as restoration experts, the opportunities for profound community discussions about restoration, discussions that might help reconnect people to the natural world, will diminish.

The third section of the book addresses the practical issue of reducing social conflict over restoration projects—how can the Chicago scenario be avoided by others? Gobster and Susan Barrow lead off with a discussion of the importance of bringing all concerned parties into the process of negotiation and design early. Clearly one of the lessons learned in Chicago was that a project can fall apart if the people who will be affected by it find out that is has been designed without taking into consideration their views and values. Robert Ryan expands upon this theme by advocating a people-centered approach to designing restoration projects, an approach that appreciates, for example, the various ways in which people become attached to urban natural areas. For Ryan, sensitivity to community values, balanced management plans, strategies to encourage use and broaden a community's buy-in, and an appropriate pace for change are all integral to a successful restoration project. In the final chapter of this section, Mark Brunson examines the concept of planning in accordance with the doctrine of Limits of Acceptable Change. The idea here is to identify relevant values, establish ways in which they might be affected, agree upon

limits on these effects, and then use these limits as the basis for planning and design.

The volume concludes with four chapters that examine the implementation of restoration projects and the maintenance of restored areas. The first chapter, by Herbert Schroeder, analyses the motives and values of the individuals who volunteer for restoration projects. Today many environmental activities depend upon volunteers who are willing to devote considerable time and expertise for something to which they attach great value. Schroeder provides a rich account of the motivations of these people and makes the interesting observation that their tendency to view themselves as engaged in a battle to do good may put them in conflict with others. Robert Grese, Jane Buxton, and Rachel Kaplan use survey techniques to inquire further into the issue of motivations. By carefully identifying the range of motivators evident in environmental volunteers, they provide a potentially useful tool for those who have to manage projects that rely on volunteers.

This section also includes a chapter by Carol Raish that asks restorationists to consider the ethical value and practical utility of integrating traditional knowledge and resource management practices into the design of their projects. Given the success some traditional forms of knowledge have had in preserving environments for centuries and even millennia, this would seem to be, at least in some situations, sound advice. The book ends with a brief overview, written by Hull and Robertson, of the main issues and themes addressed in the volume.

This is not, in the final analysis, a profound book that will influence more general discussions about the complex relationships between nature and civilization. It is, however, a useful overview of an activity that almost everyone in the country has seen at first hand, and that nonetheless is hardly ever discussed or studied. The reader is invited to consider two positions: our objective should always be to leave nature alone as much as possible, versus, we need to work on a better relationship with nature. Under certain circumstances, ecological restoration might be consonant with either view, but it is clearly more at home with the second perspective.

If one agrees that restoration is a desirable approach to improving our relationship with nature, then we must consider how to go about this. Either we work with our best understanding of ecological imperatives, that is, we try to establish authenticity for the restoration, which may require accepting the claims of experts; or we choose to design and manage the restoration in accordance with human values, which may converge but which may be quite diverse and even incommensurable. In this latter case, the value of democratic procedures is widely endorsed in this volume as a strategy for arriving at a fair decision. Of course, restorationists may act to maximize their best understanding of both natural imperatives and human values—whether this is possible, in theory or in practice, is the subject of

disagreement in this book and throughout the environmental field. Finally, the volume points out that once a plan has been made, finding ways to maintain interest and enthusiasm through the implementation, and year after year of management and maintenance, can be very challenging, especially if the project relies on volunteers.

For those interested in ecological restoration—as intellectuals, researchers, educators, activists, policymakers, consumers, or volunteers—this book is likely to be of great interest. At times the language is a bit obtuse—there is a certain amount of repetition across the chapters; they are not of equal quality—but overall, this volume succeeds in raising many important issues and in providing the reader with a rich pool of information, themes, and concepts. *Restoring Nature* succeeds, in short, in achieving the goals set by its editors.

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Changing Plant Life of La Frontera: Observations on Vegetation in the U.S./Mexico Borderlands. Edited by Grady L. Webster & Conrad J. Bahre. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001. Pp. 260. $34.95 hardcover.

Detection of environmental change is one of the most important aspects of my job, which is that of Chief of the Division of Natural and Cultural Resources Management at Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument in southern Arizona. We here at Organ Pipe have an established ecological monitoring program that is almost 11 years old now and we are part of a biological inventory and ecological monitoring network of 11 parks, mostly in southwestern Arizona. Change-detection and attribution of changes in environmental response variables to control variables (*i.e.*, stressors), both natural and anthropogenic, is very much our day-to-day business. Therefore, I approached this book with a feeling of anticipation. After assimilating the contents I discovered elements of both satisfaction and disappointment.

The editors and authors of this book have compiled a large quantity of both historic and and current information. Many citations are dated from the mid to late 1990s and represent some of the latest research in the field. On the other hand, the book really doesn't cover much, if any, new ground. Most researchers conversant in the field will already be acquainted with the cited literature and will make their own interpretations of its relevance and