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Review: Nature's Allies: Eight Conservationists Who Changed Our World

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Nielsen, L. A., Meine, C. *Nature's Allies: Eight Conservationists Who Changed Our World*. Island Press, 2017; xv, 255 pp. ISBN: 9781610917957, US \$28.00 hardcover; 9781610917971, US \$27.99 e-book; 978-1-61091-796-4, US \$21.00 paperback. Printed on recycled, acid-free paper.

Nature's Allies recounts the stories of eight individuals, each of whom left a lasting mark on natural resources. Profiled are John Muir, Ding Darling, Aldo Leopold, Rachael Carson, Chico Mendes, Billy Frank, Jr., Wangari Maathai, and Gro Harlem Bruntland. This group, while small in numbers, represents a diverse background by way of ethnicity, gender, geography, and interests. Their activities span the mid-1800s to the present and involve wildlife, forest, fisheries, and agriculture, as well as related concerns, such as civil rights and economic justice. Each took a different route to become fully engaged with nature, though some similarities are shared by the group. All came from modest backgrounds and each stayed close to their chosen field, working with others to strengthen their impact.

The book's uniqueness is the diversity of its subjects. Among the eight, some will likely be recognized conservationists and others may be lesser known or unknown. John Muir lived in Yosemite for five years before founding the Sierra Club. He became its first president and served as such for the rest of his life. Ding Darling moved the US Fish and Wildlife Service from a small bureaucracy to a conservation leader. He is best known for the introduction of Duck Stamps, creating funds for wetland conservation. Aldo Leopold was hired as the first Professor of Game Management by the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and became known as the "father of wildlife management". He is also a recognized author through his book, *A Sand County Almanac*. Rachael Carson was a quiet, restrained researcher, best known for her books, especially *Silent Spring*, which changed the use of pesticides. Chico Mendes was a leader in the effort to stop the deforestation threatening the Amazon and human life. Billy Frank, Jr. led the fight for

Native American fishing rights, and through tenacity and diplomacy helped conserve Pacific salmon. Wangari Maathai helped secure a living environment in Kenya by encouraging the planting of trees. More than fifty million trees were planted and the movement spread throughout Africa. She received a Nobel Peace Prize in 2004 for her efforts. Gro Harlem Brundtland was both a Norwegian politician, serving as Prime Minister and leader of the Labour Party, and an environmentalist, chairing the World Commission on Environment and Development, among other activities. The commission's report, *Our Common Future*, offers the prevailing definition of sustainability, "to ensure that [humanity] meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (p. 214).

Why these eight individuals? One could argue that others could have chosen for the text just as well, but these eight reveal a wide breadth of experiences both in their personal lives and the widely disparate ways taken to save what was being lost. The need for conservation extends around the world and the stories of these conservationists substantiate that conservation loss is a global problem, needing allies dedicated to stopping it. Their lives offer compelling examples of why natural resources must be protected and used without being used up.

This book is an interesting, informing read and is highly recommended for personal and public libraries. It's an ideal book for the lay reader and offers an opportunity to be introduced to a varied group of conservationists. Readers will likely find this book inspirational, if not motivational. The actions of these individuals can be readily linked to a quote by Margaret Mead, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." Their impact on conservation has proven to be monumental, and the fact that most worked with others meant that their impact was multiplied and strengthened. The author, Larry Nielsen, is a fisheries biologist and Professor of Natural Resources at North Carolina State University.

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