

Excerpts from *A Sand County Almanac*, by Aldo Leopold, 1949

p. xvii: “There are some who can live without wild things, and some who cannot. These essays are the delights and dilemmas of one who cannot. ... For us of the minority, the opportunity to see geese is more important than television, and the chance to find a pasque-flower is a right as inalienable as free speech. These wild things, I admit, had little human value until mechanization assured us of a good breakfast, and until science disclosed the drama of where they come from and how they live. The whole conflict thus boils down to a question of degree. We of the minority see a law of diminishing returns in progress; our opponents do not.”

p. xviii: “We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect. There is no other way for land to survive the impact of mechanized man, nor for us to reap from it the esthetic harvest it is capable, under science, of contributing to culture.”

p. xix: “That land is a community is the basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics. That land yields a cultural harvest is a fact long known, but latterly often forgotten.”

“But wherever the truth may lie, this much is crystal-clear: our bigger-and-better society is now like a hypochondriac, so obsessed with its own economic health as to have lost the capacity to remain healthy. The whole world is so greedy for more bathtubs that it has lost the stability necessary to build them, or even to turn off the tap. Nothing could be more salutary at this stage than a little healthy contempt for a plethora of material blessings.”

p. 10: “Yet the oak had laid down good wood for [the bootlegger]; his sawdust was as fragrant, as sound, and as pink as our own. An oak is no respecter of persons.”

p. 16: “Our saw now cuts the 1860's, when thousands died to settle the question: Is the man-man community lightly to be dismembered? They settled it, but they did not see, nor do we yet see, that the same question applies to the man-land community.”

p. 19: “But a migrating goose, staking two hundred miles of black night on the chance of finding a hole in the lake, has no easy chance for retreat. His arrival carries the conviction of a prophet who has burned his bridges.”

p. 20: “A March morning is only as drab as he who walks in it without a glance skyward, ear cocked for geese. I once knew an educated lady, banded by Phi Beta Kappa, who told me that she had never heard or seen the geese that twice a year proclaim the revolving seasons to her well-insulated roof. Is education possibly a process of trading awareness for things of lesser worth? The goose who trades his is soon a pile of feathers.”

p. 22: “It was found by mathematical analysis that flocks of six or multiples of six were far more frequent than chance alone would dictate. In other words, goose flocks are families, or aggregations of families, and lone geese in spring are probably just what our fond imaginings had first suggested. They are bereaved survivors of the winter’s shooting, searching in vain for their kin. Now I am free to grieve with and for the lone honkers. It is not often the cold-potato mathematics thus confirms the sentimental promptings of the bird-lover.”

p. 24: “It is an irony of history that the great powers should have discovered the unity of nations at Cairo in 1943. The geese of the world have had that notion for a longer time, and each March they stake their lives on its essential truth.”

p. 27: “There are degrees and kinds of solitude. An island in a lake has one kind; but lakes have boats, and there is always the chance that one might land to pay you a visit. A peak in the clouds has another kind; but most peaks have trails, and trails have tourists. I know of no solitude so secure as one guarded by a spring flood; nor do the geese, who have seen more kinds and degrees of aloneness than I have.”

p. 36: “The drama of the [male woodcock’s] sky dance is enacted nightly on hundreds of farms, the owners of which sigh for entertainment, but harbor the illusion that it is to be sought in theaters. They live on the land, but not by the land.”

p. 38: “Hemisphere solidarity is new among statesmen, but not among the feathered navies of the sky.”

p. 42: “How like fish we are: ready, nay eager, to seize upon whatever new thing some wind of circumstance shakes down upon the river of time! And how we rue our haste, finding the gilded morsel to contain a hook. Even so, I think there is some virtue in eagerness, whether its object prove true or false. How utterly dull would be a wholly prudent man, or trout, or world! ... The only prudence in fishermen is that designed to set the stage for taking yet another, and perhaps a longer, chance.”

p. 43: “What was big was not the trout, but the chance. What was full was not my creel, but my memory. Like the white-throats, I had forgotten it would ever again be aught but morning on the Fork.”

p. 50: [The lone cutleaf *Silphium*] “is one little episode in the funeral of the native flora, which in turn is one episode in the funeral of the floras of the world. Mechanized man, oblivious of floras, is proud of his progress in cleaning up the landscape on which, willy-nilly, he must live out his days. It might be wise to prohibit at once all teaching of real botany and real history, lest some future citizen suffer qualms about the floristic price of his good life.”

“Thus it comes to pass that farm neighborhoods are good in proportion to the poverty of their floras. My own farm was selected for its lack of goodness and its lack of highway; indeed my whole neighborhood lies in a backwash of the River Progress.”

p.52: “The erasure of a human subspecies is largely painless – to us – if we know little enough about it. A dead Chinaman is of little import to us whose awareness of things Chinese is bounded by an occasional dish of chow mein. We grieve only for what we know. The erasure of Silphium from western Dane County is no cause for grief if one knows it only as a name in a botany book.”

p. 54: “It is a kind providence that has withheld a sense of history from the thousands of species of plants and animals that have exterminated each other to build the present world. The same kind providence now withholds it from us. Few grieved when the last buffalo left Wisconsin, and few will grieve when the last Silphium follows him to the lush prairies of the never-never land.”

p. 57: “There is a peculiar virtue in the music of elusive birds. Songsters that sing from top-most boughs are easily seen and as easily forgotten; they have the mediocrity of the obvious.”

“The disappointment I feel on these mornings of silence perhaps shows that things hoped for have a higher value than things assured. The hope of hearing quail is worth half a dozen risings-in-the-dark.”

p. 59: “Hunts differ in flavor, but the reasons are subtle. The sweetest hunts are stolen. To steal a hunt, either go far into the wilderness where no one has been, or else find some undiscovered place under everybody’s nose.”

p. 61: “Many thoughts, like flying grouse, leave no trace of their passing, but some leave clues that outlast the decades.”

p. 63: “Early risers feel at ease with each other, perhaps because, unlike those who sleep late, they are given to understatement of their own achievements. Orion, the most widely traveled, says literally nothing...”

p. 65: “Like many another treaty of restraint, the pre-dawn pact lasts only as long as darkness humbles the arrogant. It would seem as if the sun were responsible for the daily retreat of reticence from the world.”

p. 72: “Whoever owns land has thus assumed, whether he knows it or not, the divine functions of creating and destroying plants.”

p. 74: “The only conclusion I have ever reached is that I love all trees, but I am in love with pines. As I said, November is the month for the axe, and, as in other love affairs, there is skill in the exercise of bias.”

p. 76: “To me an ancient cottonwood is the greatest of trees because in his youth he shaded the buffalo and wore a halo of pigeons, and I like the young cottonwood because he may some day become ancient. But the farmer’s wife (and hence the farmer) despises all cottonwoods because in June the female tree clogs the screens with cotton. The modern dogma is comfort at any cost.”

p. 77: “The coon-hunter will not dislike basswood, and I know of quail hunters who bear no grudge against ragweed, despite their annual bout with hayfever. Our biases are indeed a sensitive index to our affections, our tastes, our loyalties, our generousities, and our manner of wasting weekends.”

p. 86: “Acts of creation are ordinarily reserved for gods and poets, but humbler folk may circumvent this restriction if they know how. To plant a pine, for example, one need be neither god nor poet; one need only own a shovel.”

p. 87: “Why is the shovel regarded as a symbol of drudgery? Perhaps because most shovels are dull.”

p. 107: “Thus always does history, whether of marsh [or] market place, end in paradox. The ultimate value of these marshes is wildness, and the crane is wildness incarnate. But all conservation of wildness is self-defeating, for to cherish we must see and fondle, and when enough have seen and fondled, there is no wilderness left to cherish.”

p. 108: “Every profession keeps a small herd of epithets, and needs a pasture where they may run at large. Thus economists must find free range somewhere for their pet aspersions, such a submarginality, regression, and institutional rigidity.”

p. 116: “Our grandfathers were less well-housed, well-fed, well-clothed than we are. The strivings by which they bettered their lot are also those which deprived us of pigeons. Perhaps we now grieve because we are not sure, in our hearts, that we have gained by the exchange. The gadgets of industry bring us more comforts than the pigeon did, but do they add as much to the glory of the spring?

“It is a century now since Darwin gave us the first glimpse of the origin of species. We know now what was unknown to all the preceding caravan of generations: that men are only fellow-voyagers with other creatures in the odyssey of evolution. This new knowledge should have given us, by this time, a sense of kinship with fellow-creatures; a wish to live and let live; a sense of wonder over the magnitude and duration of the biotic enterprise.

“Above all we should, in the century since Darwin, have come to know that man, while now captain of the adventuring ship, is hardly the sole object of its quest, and that his prior assumptions to this effect arose from the simple necessity of whistling in the dark.”

p. 120: [Two boys in a canoe] “‘What time is it?’ was their first question. They explained that their watches had run down, and for the first time in their lives there was no clock, whistle, or radio to set watches by. For two days they had lived by ‘sun-time,’ and were getting a thrill out of it. ... The elemental simplicities of wilderness travel were thrills not only because of their novelty, but because they represented complete freedom to make mistakes. The wilderness gave them their first taste of those rewards and penalties for wise and foolish acts which every woodsman faces daily, but against which civilization has built a thousand buffers.”

p. 124: “Girdling the old oak to squeeze one last crop out of the barnyard has the same finality as burning the furniture to keep warm.”

p. 127: “When I call to mind my earliest impressions, I wonder whether the process ordinarily referred to as growing up is not actually a process of growing down; whether experience, so much touted among adults as the thing children lack, is not actually a progressive dilution of the essentials by the trivialities of living.”

p. 130: “Thus by elimination, the county-sized plateau known as ‘on top’ was the exclusive domain of the mounted man ... It is difficult for this generation to understand this aristocracy of space based upon transport.”

p. 134: [Lightning] “It must be a poor life that achieves freedom from fear.”

p. 135: “The history of the mountain was written not only in aspen bark, but in its place names. Cow-country place names are lewd, humorous, ironic, or sentimental, but seldom trite. Usually they are subtle enough to draw inquiry from new arrivals, whereby hangs that web of tales which, full spun, constitutes the local folklore.”

p. 138: “We reached the old wolf in time to watch a fierce green fire dying in her eyes. I realized then, and have known ever since, that there was something new to me in those eyes – something known only to her and to the mountain. I was young then, and full of trigger-itch; I thought that because fewer wolves meant more deer, that no wolves would mean hunters’ paradise. But after seeing the green fire die, I sensed that neither the wolf nor the mountain agreed with such a view.”

p. 140: “I now suspect that just as a deer herd lives in mortal fear of its wolves, so does a mountain live in mortal fear of its deer. And perhaps with better cause, for while a buck pulled down by wolves can be replaced in two or three years, a range pulled down by too many deer may fail of replacement in as many decades.”

p. 157: “Man always kills the thing he loves, and so we the pioneers have killed our wilderness. Some say we had to. Be that as it may, I am glad I shall never be young without wild country to be young in. Of what avail are forty freedoms without a blank spot on the map?”

p. 163: “Science contributes moral as well as material blessings to the world. Its great moral contribution is objectivity, or the scientific point of view. This means doubting everything except facts; it means hewing to the facts, let the chips fall where they may. One of the facts hewn to by science is that every river needs more people, and all people need more inventions, and hence more science; the good life depends on the indefinite extension of this chain of logic. That the good life on any river may likewise depend on the perception of its music, and the preservation of some music to perceive, is a form of doubt not yet entertained by science.”

p. 164: “Just as there is honor among thieves, so there is solidarity and co-operation among plant and animal pests. Where one pest is stopped by natural barriers, another arrives to breach the same wall by a new approach. In the end every region and every resource get their quota of uninvited ecological guests.”

p. 168: “There is, as yet, no sense of pride in the husbandry of wild plants and animals, no sense of shame in the proprietorship of a sick landscape. We tilt windmills in behalf of conservation in convention halls and editorial offices, but on the back forty we disclaim even owning a lance.”

“Education, I fear, is learning to see one thing by going blind to another. ... One thing most of us have gone blind to is the quality of marshes.”

p. 177: “There is much confusion between land and country. Land is the place where corn, gullies, and mortgages grow. Country is the personality of land, the collective harmony of its soil, life, and weather. Country knows no mortgages, no alphabetical agencies, no tobacco road; it is calmly aloof to these petty exigencies of its alleged owners. That the previous occupant of my farm was a bootlegger mattered not one whit to its grouse; they sailed as proudly over the thickets as if they were guests of a king.

“Poor land may be rich country, and vice versa. Only economists mistake physical opulence for riches. Country may be rich despite a conspicuous poverty of physical endowment, and its quality may not be apparent at first glance, nor at all times.”

p. 178: [I cannot,] “by logical deduction, prove that a thicket without the potential roar of a quail covey is only a thorny place. Yet every outdoorsman knows that this is true. That wildlife is merely something to shoot at or to look at is the grossest of fallacies. It often represents the difference between rich country and mere land.

“There are woods that are plain to look at, but not to look into. ... The taste for country displays the same diversity in aesthetic competence among individuals as the taste for opera, or oils. There are those who are willing to be herded in droves through ‘scenic’ places; who find mountains grand if they be proper mountains with waterfalls, cliffs, and lakes. To such the Kansas plains are tedious ...

“In country, as in people, a plain exterior often conceals hidden riches, to perceive which requires much living in and with. ...”

p. 181: Ariosto: “How miserable are the idle hours of the ignorant man!”

“The man who cannot enjoy his leisure is ignorant, though his degrees exhaust the alphabet, and the man who does enjoy his leisure is to some extent educated, though he has never seen the inside of a school.”

p. 182: “What is a hobby anyway? ... At first blush I am tempted to conclude that a satisfactory hobby must be in large degree useless, inefficient, laborious, or irrelevant. ... A hobby is a defiance of the contemporary. It is an assertion of those permanent values which the momentary eddies of social evolution have contravened or overlooked. If this is true, then we may also say that every hobbyist is inherently a radical, and that his tribe is inherently a minority.

“This, however, is serious; becoming serious is a grievous fault in hobbyists. It is an axiom that no hobby should either seek or need rational justification. To wish to do it is reason enough. To find reasons why it is useful or beneficial converts it at once from an avocation into an industry – lowers it at once to the ignominious category of an ‘exercise’ undertaken for health, power, or profit. Lifting dumbbells is not a hobby. It is a confession of subservience, not an assertion of liberty.”

p. 186: “A good hobby, in these times, is one that entails either making something or making the tools to make it with, and then using it to accomplish some needless thing. When we have passed out of the present age, a good hobby will be the reverse of all these. I come again to the defiance of the contemporary.”

p. 187: “A good hobby must also be a gamble. [bow bursting into splinters] The possible debacle is, in short, an essential element in all hobbies, and stands in bold contradistinction to the humdrum certainty that the endless belt will eventuate in a Ford.”

“Nonconformity is the highest evolutionary attainment of social animals, and will grow no faster than other new functions.”

p. 189: “In our educational system, the biotic continuum is seldom pictured to us as a stream. ... To learn the hydrology of the biotic stream we must think at right angles to evolution and examine the collective behavior of biotic materials. This calls for a reversal of specialization; instead of learning more and more about less and less, we must learn more and more about the whole biotic landscape.

“Ecology is a science that attempts this feat of thinking in a plane perpendicular to Darwin.”

“Conservation is a state of harmony between men and land. By land is meant all of the things on, over, or in the earth. Harmony with land is like harmony with a friend; you cannot cherish his right hand and chop off his left. That is to say, you cannot love game and hate predators; you cannot conserve the waters and waste the ranges; you cannot build the forest and mine the farm. The land is one organism. Its parts, like our own parts, compete with each other and co-operate with each other.”

p. 190: “The outstanding scientific discovery of the twentieth century is not television, or radio, but rather the complexity of the land organism. Only those who know the most about it can appreciate how little is known about it. The last word in ignorance is the man who says of an animal or plant: ‘What good is it?’ If the land mechanism as a whole is good, then every part is good, whether we understand it or not. If the biota, in the course of aeons, has built something we like but do not understand, then who but a fool would discard seemingly useless parts? To keep every cog and wheel is the first precaution of intelligent tinkering.”

p. 193: “... stability and diversity were apparently interdependent.”

p. 194: “In our attempts to save the bigger cogs and wheels, we are still pretty naive. A little repentance just before a species goes over the brink is enough to make us feel virtuous. When the species is gone we have a good cry and repeat the performance.”

p. 197: “One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds. Much of the damage inflicted on land is quite invisible to laymen. An ecologist must either harden his shell and make believe that the consequences of science are none of his business, or he must be the doctor who sees the marks of death in a community that believes itself well and does not want to be told otherwise.”

p. 199: “As for diversity, what remains of our native fauna and flora remains only because agriculture has not got around to destroying it. The present ideal of agriculture is clean farming; cleaning farming means a food chain aimed solely at economic profit and purged of all non-conforming links, a sort of *Pax Germanica* of the agricultural world. Diversity, on the other hand, means a food chain aimed to harmonize the wild and the tame in the joint interest of stability, productivity, and beauty.”

p. 201: “Considering the prodigious achievements of the profit motive in wrecking land, one hesitates to reject it as a vehicle for restoring land. I incline to believe we have overestimated the scope of the profit motive. Is it profitable for the individual to build a beautiful home? To give his children a higher education? No, it is seldom profitable, yet we do both. These are, in fact, ethical and aesthetic premises which underlie the economic system. Once accepted, economic forces tend to align the smaller details of social organization into harmony with them.

“No such ethical and aesthetic premise yet exists for the condition of the land these children must live in. Our children are our signature to the roster of history; our land is merely the place our money was made. There is as yet no social stigma in the possession of a gullied farm, a wrecked forest, or a polluted stream, provided the dividends suffice to send the youngsters to college. Whatever ails the land, the government will fix it.

“I think we have here the root of the problem. What conservation education must build is an ethical underpinning for land economics and a universal curiosity to understand the land mechanism. Conservation may then follow.”

p. 203: “What better expresses land than the plants that originally grew on it?”

p. 210: “The problem, then, is how to bring about a striving for harmony with land among a people many of whom have forgotten there is any such thing as land, among whom education and culture have become almost synonymous with landlessness. This is the problem of ‘consevation education.’”

p. 211: “... there are cultural values in the sports, customs, and experiences that renew contacts with wild things.

“First there is value in any experience that reminds us of our distinctive national origins and evolution, i.e. that stimulates awareness of history. Such awareness is ‘nationalism’ in its best sense. ... Second, there is value in any experience that reminds us of our dependency on the soil-plant-animal-man food chain, and of the fundamental organization of the biota. Civilization has so cluttered this elemental man-earth relation with gadgets and middlemen that awareness of it is growing dim. We fancy that industry supports us, forgetting what supports industry. ... Third, there is value in any experience that exercises those ethical restraints collectively called ‘sportsmanship.’ Our tools for the pursuit of wildlife improve faster than we do, and sportsmanship is a voluntary limitation in the use of these armaments. It is aimed to augment the role of skill and shrink the role of gadgets in the pursuit of wild things.

“A peculiar virtue in wildlife ethics is that the hunter ordinarily has no gallery to applaud or disapprove of his conduct. Whatever his acts, they are dictated by his own conscience, rather than by a mob of onlookers. ...

“Voluntary adherence to an ethical code elevates the self-respect of the sportsman, but it should not be forgotten that voluntary disregard of the code degenerates and depraves him.”

p. 213: [birth of the ‘go-light’ idea] “The pioneer went light of necessity. He shot with economy and precision because he lacked the transport, the cash, and the weapons requisite for machine-gun tactics. ... In their later evolution, however, they became a code of sportsmanship, a self-imposed limitation on sport. On them is based a distinctively American tradition of self-reliance, hardihood, woodcraft, and marksmanship. These are intangibles, but they are not abstractions.”

p. 215: “Somehow [Theodore Roosevelt and Stewart Edward White] used mechanical aids, in moderation, without being used by them.

“I do not pretend to know what is moderation, or where the line is between legitimate and illegitimate gadgets. It seems clear, though, that the origin of gadgets has much to do with their cultural effects. Homemade aids to sport or outdoor life often enhance, rather than destroy, the man-earth drama; he who kills a trout with his own fly has scored two coups, not one. I use many factory-made gadgets myself. Yet there must be some limit beyond which money-bought aids to sport destroy the cultural value of the sport.”

p. 216: “I have the impression that the American sportsman is puzzled; he doesn’t understand what is happening to him. Bigger and better gadgets are good for industry, so why not for outdoor recreation? It has not dawned on him that outdoor recreations are essentially primitive, atavistic; that their value is a contrast-value; that excessive mechanization destroys contrasts by moving the factory to the woods or to the marsh.”

p. 217: “It is not quite accurate to ascribe all the ills of sport to the inventor of physical aids-to-sport. The advertiser invents ideas, and ideas are seldom as honest as physical objects, even though they may be equally useless. One such deserves special mention: the ‘where-to-go’ department. ...”

p. 218: “All of these organized promiscuities [telling Tom, Dick, and Harry where the fish are biting, etc.] tend to depersonalize one of the essentially personal elements in outdoor sports. I do not know where the line lies between legitimate and illegitimate practice; I am convinced, though, that ‘where-to-go’ service has broken all bounds of reason.”

p. 221: “... the whole structure of biological education ... is aimed to perpetuate the professional monopoly on research.”

p. 222: “To sum up, wildlife once fed us and shaped our culture. It still yields us pleasure for leisure hours, but we try to reap that pleasure by modern machinery and thus destroy part of its value. Reaping it by modern mentality would yield not only pleasure, but wisdom as well.”

p. 232: [defending hunting] “But after all, it is poor business to prove that one good thing is better than another.”

p. 237: “During the three thousand years which have since elapsed [since the days of Odysseus], ethical criteria have been extended to many fields of conduct, with corresponding shrinkages in those judged by expediency only.”

p. 238: “An ethic, ecologically, is a limitation on freedom of action in the struggle for existence.”

“There is as yet no ethic dealing with man’s relation to land and to the animals and plants which grow upon it. Land, like Odysseus’ slave-girls, is still property. The land-relation is still strictly economic, entailing privileges but not obligations.

“The extension of ethics to this third element in human environment is, if I read the evidence correctly, an evolutionary possibility and an ecological necessity.”

“All ethics so far evolved rest upon a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts. His instincts prompt him to compete for his place in the community, but his ethics prompt him also to co-operate ...”

p. 240: “A land ethic of course cannot prevent the alteration, management, and use of these ‘resources,’ but it does affirm their right to continued existence, and, at least in spots, their continued existence in a natural state.

“In short, a land ethic changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members, and also respect for the community as such.”

p. 244: “Is not this formula [of minimal expectations of ‘conservation education’] too easy to accomplish anything worth-while? It defines no right or wrong, assigns no obligation, calls for no sacrifice, implies no change in the current philosophy of values. In respect of land-use, it urges only enlightened self-interest. Just how far will such education take us?”

p. 245: “... the existence of obligations over and above self-interest is taken for granted in such rural community enterprises as the betterment of roads, schools, churches, and baseball teams. ... Land-use ethics are still governed wholly by economic self-interest, just as social ethics were a century ago.”

p. 246: “... we have been too timid, and too anxious for quick success, to tell the farmer the true magnitude of his obligations. Obligations have no meaning without conscience, and the problem we face is the extension of the social conscience from people to land.”

“In our attempt to make conservation easy, we have made it trivial.”

“One basic weakness in a conservation system based wholly on economic motives is that most members of the land community have no economic value. Wildflowers and songbirds are examples.”

p. 247: “We have no land ethic yet, but we have at least drawn nearer the point of admitting that birds should continue as a matter of biotic right, regardless of the presence or absence of economic advantage to us.”

p. 249: “Lack of economic value is sometimes a character not only of a species or groups, but of entire biotic communities: marshes, bogs, dunes, and ‘deserts’ are examples.”

“There is a clear tendency in American conservation to relegate to government all necessary jobs that private landowners fail to perform. ... What is the ultimate magnitude of the enterprise? At what point will governmental conservation, like the mastodon, become handicapped by its own dimensions? The answer, if there is any, seems to be in a land ethic, or some other force which assigns more obligation to the private landowner.”

“Industrial landowners and users, especially lumbermen and stockmen, are inclined to wail long and loudly about the extension of government ownership and regulation to land, but (with notable exceptions) they show little disposition to develop the only visible alternative: the voluntary practice of conservation on their own lands.”

p. 251: “To sum up: a system of conservation based solely on economic self-interest is hopelessly lopsided. It tends to ignore, and thus eventually to eliminate, many elements in the land community that lack commercial value, but that are (as far as we know) essential to its healthy functioning. It assumes, falsely, I think, that the economic parts of the biotic clock will function without the uneconomic parts. It tends to relegate to government many functions eventually too large, too complex, or too widely dispersed to be performed by government.

“An ethical obligation on the part of the private owner is the only visible remedy for these situations.”

p. 258: “A land ethic, then, reflects the existence of an ecological conscience, and this in turn reflects a conviction of individual responsibility for the health of the land. Health is the capacity of the land for self-renewal. Conservation is our effort to understand and preserve this capacity.”

p. 262: “... quit thinking about decent land-use as solely an economic problem. Examine each question in terms of what is ethically and esthetically right, as well as what is economically expedient. A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.

“It of course goes without saying that economic feasibility limits the tether of what can or cannot be done for land. It always has and it always will. The fallacy the economic determinists have tied around our collective neck, and which we now need to cast off, is the belief that economics determines *all* land-use. This is simply not true. An innumerable host of actions and attitudes, comprising perhaps the bulk of all land relations, is determined by the land-users’ tastes and predilections, rather than by his purse. The bulk of all land relations hinges on investments of time, forethought, skill, and faith rather than on investments of cash. As a land-user thinketh, so is he.”

p. 263: “By and large, our present problem is one of attitudes and implements.”

p. 264: “For the first time in the history of the human species, two changes are now impending. One is the exhaustion of wilderness in the more habitable portions of the globe. The other is the world-wide hybridization of cultures through modern transport and industrialization.”

p. 269: “Of what use are wild areas destitute of their distinctive faunas?”

“Public wilderness areas are, first of all, a means of perpetuating, in sport form, the more virile and primitive skills in pioneering travel and subsistence.”

p. 270: “Wilderness areas are first of all a series of sanctuaries for the primitive arts of wilderness travel, especially canoeing and packing.”

p. 272: “Recreation is valuable in proportion to the intensity of its experiences, and to the degree to which it *differs from* and *contrasts with* workaday life. By these criteria, mechanized outings are at best a milk-and-water affair.

“Mechanized recreation already has seized nine-tenths of the woods and mountains; a decent respect for minorities should dedicate the other tenth to wilderness.”

p. 277: “Relegating grizzlies to Alaska is about like relegating happiness to heaven; one may never get there.”

p. 278: “Wilderness is a resource which can shrink but not grow.”

p. 279: “Ability to see the cultural value of wilderness boils down, in the last analysis, to a question of intellectual humility. The shallow-minded modern who has lost his rootage in the land assumes that he has already discovered what is important; it is such who prate of empires, political or economic, that will last a thousand years. 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. It is only the scholar who understands why the raw wilderness gives definition and meaning to the human enterprise.”

p. 280 ff: The “Conservation Esthetic.”

“It began to be noticed that the greater the exodus, the smaller the per-capita ration of peace, solitude, wildlife, and scenery, and the longer the migration to reach them.”

“The automobile has spread this once mild and local predicament to the outermost limits of good roads ...”

“But to him who seeks something more [than golf], recreation has become a self-destructive process of seeking but never quite finding, a major frustration of mechanized society.”

“Everywhere is the unspecialized motorist whose recreation is mileage, who has run the gamut of the National Parks in one summer, and now is headed for Mexico City and points south.”

“All these things [“game and fish, and the symbols of tokens of achievement such as heads, hides, photographs, and specimens”] rest upon the idea of *trophy*. The trophy ... is a *certificate*. It attests that its owner has been somewhere and done something – that he has exercised skill, persistence, or discrimination in the age-old feat of overcoming, outwitting, or reducing-to-possession. These connotations which attach to the trophy usually far exceed its physical value.”

“Very intensive management of game or fish lowers the unit value of the trophy by artificializing it.”

[A hatchery trout from an over-fished and degraded stream vs. a wild one from an unmanaged stream] “No one would claim that this trout has the same value as a wholly wild one ... Its esthetic connotations are inferior, even though its capture may require skill. ... All intergrades of artificiality exist, but as mass-use increases it tends to push the whole gamut of conservation techniques toward the artificial end, and the whole scale of trophy-values downward. ... [By killing off “all herons and terns visiting the hatchery where it was raised, and all mergansers and otters inhabiting the stream in which it is released ...] Artificialized management has, in effect, bought fishing at the expense of another and perhaps higher recreation; it has paid dividends to one citizen out of capital stock belonging to all.”

“... mass-use tends to dilute the quality of organic trophies like game and fish, and to induce damage to other resources such as non-game animals, natural vegetation, and farm crops.

“The same dilution and damage is not apparent in the yield of ‘indirect’ trophies, such as photographs. Broadly speaking, a piece of scenery snapped by a dozen tourist cameras daily is not physically impaired thereby, nor does it suffer if photographed a hundred times. The camera industry is one of the few innocuous parasites on wild nature.”

“In short, the very scarcity of wild places, reacting with the *mores* of advertising and promotion, tends to defeat any deliberate effort to prevent their growing still more scarce.”

“Recreation, however, is not the outdoors, but our reaction to it. Daniel Boone’s reaction depended not only on the quality of what he saw, but on the quality of the mental eye with which he saw it. ... Perception, in short, cannot be purchased with either learned degrees or dollars; it grows at home as well as abroad, and he who has a little may use it to as good advantage as he who has much. As a search for perception, the recreational stampede is footless and unnecessary.”

“There is, lastly, a fifth component: the sense of husbandry. It is unknown to the outdoorsman who works for conservation with his vote rather than with his hands. It is realized only when some art of management is applied to land by some person of perception. That is to say, its enjoyment is reserved for landholders too poor to buy their sport, and land administrators with a sharp eye and an ecological mind. The tourist who buys access to his scenery misses it altogether; so also the sportsman who hires the state, or some underling, to be his gamekeeper.”

“That a sense of husbandry exercised in the production of crops may be quite as important as the crops themselves is realized to some extent in agriculture, but not in conservation.”

“Scientists have an epigram: ontogeny repeats phylogeny. What they mean is that the development of each individual repeats the evolutionary history of the race. This is true of mental as well as physical things. The trophy-hunter is the caveman reborn. Trophy-hunting is the prerogative of youth, racial or individual, and nothing to apologize for.

“The disquieting thing in the modern picture is the trophy-hunter who never grows up, in whom the capacity for isolation, perception, and husbandry is undeveloped, or perhaps lost. He is the motorized ant who swarms the continents before learning to see his own back yard, who consumes but never creates outdoor satisfactions. For him the recreational engineer dilutes the wilderness and artificializes its trophies in the fond belief that he is rendering a public service.”

“The trophy-recreationist has peculiarities that contribute in subtle ways to his own undoing. To enjoy he must possess, invade, appropriate. ... It would appear, in short, that the rudimentary grades of outdoor recreation consume their resource-base; the higher grades, at least to a degree, create their own satisfactions with little or no attrition of land or life. It is the expansion of transport without a corresponding growth of perception that threatens us with qualitative bankruptcy of the recreational process. Recreational development is a job not of building roads into lovely country, but of building receptivity into the still unlovely human mind.”