

Trees At Risk: Reclaiming an Urban Forest, by Evelyn Herwitz. Worcester, MA: Chandler House Press, Inc (2001), iv, 200 pp.

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Evelyn Herwitz has contributed a major historical work with a strong environmental message in *Trees At Risk: Reclaiming an Urban Forest*. The City of Worcester, MA serves as the focal point for this evolving story of grassroots negligence and activism. The author is adept at uncovering the societal and industrial forces that carved a city out of the wilderness, and sometimes molded a little of the wilderness back into the city.

An ambitious work, the book is a 200-page treasure with 16 pages of color photos, and numerous illustrations throughout. Nature lovers will also appreciate the occasional botanical information and illustrations of native trees.

Trees At Risk is both a hopeful blueprint and a cautionary tale of what cities can do to protect and promote their urban forests, and what can happen if they do not. Ms. Herwitz is a skilled historian, but also a masterful wordsmith. For example:

On a chill December afternoon when the hardwoods stand barren, their fallen leaves but sodden dregs of autumn's gold, Worcester's hues are clay and stone. Viewed from Mount St. James, once home to native Nipmucs, now to the College of the Holy Cross, the muted city melds with the dun-colored woodlands of surrounding hills - its red-brick factory buildings and cement offices crowding the valley floor, a glass-and-steel bank tower mirroring winter's slate sky, white and frown and beige three-deckers climbing rocky hillsides, the charcoal-gray swath of I-290 snaking over streets.

Come spring, though, there is green. First, a fine misting of chartreuse as the weeping willows unfurl their buds, then a wash of emerald as the sugar and Norway maples, the ashes, oaks and ginkgoes spread their leaves, until Worcester's swarthy face is softened by a sylvan veil. A city of aging factories and dreams of renewal, of ethnic pride and paternalism, of grit, ingenuity and determination, Worcester is also a city of trees.

Her work reaches far beyond Worcester though, in its lessons and implications. She looks at the national picture of demising urban forests. Statistics abound: "the average life of a city tree is only 32 years - 13 if planted downtown - far short of the 150-year average life span of trees in rural settings." What's more, city tree planting and maintenance budgets have been slashed nationwide, and urban parks are also at risk.

The story of the threat to Worcester's trees is the story of the relationship between Americans and nature - at times exploitative, at times romantic, and occasionally reverent. She gives a clear history of the local native landscape, and its gradual civilization. And, throughout the work she provides wonderful snippets of historical significance, like the quote from Genesis that English settlers liked to use to justify their taking of Native land: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it." But, the settlers proved far more accomplished at subduing than replenishing, as have their offspring, even to this day.

The sad history of the wasting of trees, deforestation, and industrial transformation are detailed, as are early conservation efforts in the mid-eighteenth century, and the first use of public funds for tree planting, a century later. She follows the trend of the romantic ideal of pastoral land in rural cemetery design, through to the "Greening of Worcester" in 1885 with the planting of 500 trees by the Worcester Grange.

The book traces the urban parks movement, and the inevitable growing demand for green space as the city expanded. Then, it chronicles the turn of the century, and the theme of "Wilderness Squandered." As the Worcester case study continues, Ms. Herwitz examined politics, the railroad, the Hurricane of '38, the Great Depression, ethnic politics and public parks, the Chestnut Blight, and Dutch Elm Disease.

As the 20th century gathered momentum, the early precursors to land use controls and planned communities are seen and followed up to current times. As budget cuts and benign neglect took hold, a legacy was being squandered, and the trend was national. "A 1991 survey of urban tree care programs in 20 major American cities by the national conservation group American Forests revealed that nearly three-fourths of those communities had cut back funding for street trees, despite the fact that they had collectively planted only about one tree for every four needed just to maintain their current tree census."

Thus, the powerful story of an urban forest, lost and found again and again, teaches us to open our eyes in our own hometowns. The author then calls us to action, using global numbers that we have almost grown numb to:

- In the past 50 years, global deforestation and exponential acceleration of fossil fuel consumption and methane gas production have raised the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere to about 25 to 30 % above levels that have prevailed for the past 160,000 years, and could double by the 21st century.

- The arctic ice cap has thinned by 42%.

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- The world's coral reefs have thinned by 27%.
- Rainforests could disappear in 25 - 30 years.
- Air pollution, acid rain.

It all adds up, or maybe we should say, it all subtracts, down, down, down.

But, she also provides us with hope. She points to good stewardship in Milwaukee, and other positive examples around the country. And, she discusses modern economic forces that are driven by the pressure of population growth and basic human nature. These economic forces are then seen as possible sources of support for the future of our urban forests.

Our suggestion is that our cities do in fact have the economic and technological resources to grow magnificent urban forests, but they lack the political will. Further, we would say that political will, rooted in the minds and hearts of the public, can be won through education. There is an old Chinese proverb: "Think one year ahead - plant rice; think ten years ahead - plant trees; think one-hundred years ahead - educate people."

And, we would finally suggest that North America's 1200+ nature centers are good places to look to. Nature centers teach environmental values, and are vital members of their communities. While school districts may be slow to advocate for social action or conservation, nature centers are busily doing just that.

The education of all citizens, not just the young and not-yet-enfranchised, but the adults, the property owners, the industrial leaders, and our civic representatives - all need education. However, sending them facts and figures, and even sending them this wonderful book, will probably not do the trick.

They spend the vast majority of their lives indoors. They need contact with nature. If you want to educate someone about the value of trees, take them to an arboretum, or a nature center, or a fabulous old urban park. Once inspired, *Trees At Risk* can help any community organizer understand what mistakes to avoid, what social forces are in play, and just how much truly is at risk.

Evelyn Herwitz deserves the thanks of all the tree-huggers, tree-lovers, and even those not yet educated and inspired. As a boy, Brent's one great and often expressed fear of growing up was that he might someday no longer want to climb trees. Well, he's 54, and still climbing (every now and then)!

Negotiating Nature: Culture, Power and Environmental Argument, Hornborg, A. and Gisli Palsson, eds. Lund, Sweden: Lund University Press (2000), 225 pp.

Reviewed by Leif John Fosse, World Wide Fund for Nature, Oslo, Norway.

This collection of essays emerged out of a social science initiative of the Nordic Council of Ministers' Nordic Environmental Research Programme, and examines the cultural dimensions of environmental policy negotiations. Whereas much environmental social science research tends to focus on the institutional, legal, economic or sociological aspects of such negotiations, the aim of these authors, ten anthropologists and ethnologists from Sweden, Norway and Iceland, is to highlight their symbolic, experiential, and ideological aspects. In other words, they seek to identify the metaphors, symbols or aesthetic ideals that implicitly frame discourses on the environment.

This review, in turn, is written by an environmental anthropologist practitioner, rather than researcher. Therefore, any failure to place the contributions in the proper context of ongoing academic discourses and exchanges on the environment may be due to the perspective of the reviewer rather than a failure of the individual authors or editors. The editors' introduction provides a good overview of the contributors' main arguments and I draw extensively on their observations in this review.

The volume's subject matter is approached through a diverse set of concerns with the phenomenology of tourism, landscape conservation, environmental activism, and the practical management of fisheries and reindeer pastures. The perspectives are too disparate; by the editors' own admission, to represent a uniform statement on how to apply culture theory to environmental issues. There is, however, a common preoccupation with how cultural perceptions of nature are generated. A concluding commentary by Tim Ingold places the individual contributions in a wider perspective in a succinct overview of anthropological approaches to the environment.

The first five contributions are concerned with how cultural perceptions of nature are generated at the experiential and phenomenological level. Löfgren discusses the way cultural ideals about the kinds of nature found