

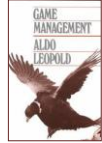
Aldo Leopold – Short Biography



Photo: <http://www.nps.gov/leopold/>

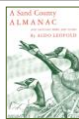
- Born in Iowa 1887 near the Mississippi River
 - Keen interest in and observer of the natural world even as a youngster
 - Decided by the 8th grade to become a forester
- Attended Yale School of Forestry – graduated 1909 (the last year of Teddy Roosevelt's presidency)
- Took position with the USFS
 - Sent to Arizona Territories – spent 15 years as forester in Arizona/New Mexico
 - Began to formulate his ideas about the concept of community and the land as an integrated system
 - Was not opposed to timber harvesting – but recognized that wood was only one of the values
 - Was a supreme naturalist – one of first to recognize the...
 - Benefits of predators (wolves, grizzlies, cougars)
 - Benefits of fire
 - Benefits of a healthy and complete ecosystem

Aldo Leopold – Short Biography



- 1924 moved to Madison, Wisconsin; began teaching at the University in 1928
- 1933 Published landmark book “Game Management”
 - Integrated habitat management with game management
 - Considered the father of **wildlife ecology**
- Was one of the founders of the Wildlife Society and was its first president
- Founded discipline of **ecological restoration** of native ecosystems
- Was first president of the Ecological Society of America

Aldo Leopold – Short Biography



- 1935 purchased “worn-out farm” near Baraboo in the sand counties of Wisconsin
 - Invested time, thought and resources to restore the land
 - Wrote essays detailing observations and activities at “the shack”
 - 1942 began work on his Sand County essays – thoughts on conservation, wilderness, forestry, predators, soil erosion and the need for a change in values
- 1948 –Died of heart attack while fighting a grass fire on his neighbor's property
- 1949 – Publication of “A Sand County Almanac”
 - “The Land Ethic” was one of the essays in the book
 - Changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror to member and citizen
 - Promotes a philosophy of living in harmony with “the land” (the totality of the environment – rocks, trees, animals, soil...)

“The Land Ethic”

“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.” – Aldo Leopold

- Ethics
 - Ecologically - limitations on freedom of action in the struggle for existence
 - Philosophically - differentiation of social from anti-social behaviors
 - Ethics guide people for meeting new ecological situations, especially where the long-term consequences are not apparent
- Suggests use of the “precautionary principle” – if uncertain about an outcome, take the conservative action – conserve the parts

Leopold's Model

- Why bother? Why care?
 - *"All ethics so far evolved rest upon a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts."*
 - Ethics tell us to cooperate with other members of the community in the struggle for existence
- Progression of ethical development
 - First - relationships between individuals
 - Next - relationships between individuals and society
 - Finally - The Land Ethic expands idea to include the relationship between individuals and the environment (the land – rocks, soil, trees, animals, rivers, etc.)
- The Land Ethic **does not mean** preventing use – it does mean affirming the right of others to continued existence
- The Land Ethic shifts the paradigm of man as conqueror to man as citizen of the land community
 - Entails obligations and a conscience
 - Extends the social conscience from people to the land
 - Cannot be based on economic value (environmental economics may shift this somewhat)

Leopold's Model

- "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."
- Leopold tell us to stop thinking about land-use only in economic terms, but rather to think "in terms of what is ethically and esthetically right as well as what is economically expedient."
- Leopold's Land Ethic became the basis for conservationist thinking into the mid and late 20th century and beyond.

*Can self-renewal be described as resilience?

More on Leopold The Green Fire Film Project

- Green Fire:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQED4YEMx9A>

Your thoughts...

1. Are humans part of nature or should (the rest of) nature exist solely for us? Or should it be protected from us?
2. How should we treat nature? Do animals have inalienable rights? What about rivers? Forests? Fungi?
3. Do we really know enough about nature to think we can manage for all possible scenarios? All possible outcomes?
4. Do we still *need* "wild" nature? Is a backyard enough? Why?/Why not?
5. Who gets to choose how we use nature? Is economic value the right measure?
6. What does Leopold mean by the phrase: "Thinking Like a Mountain"?
7. What was the lesson for Leopold in watching "the fierce green fire die in the old wolf's eyes"?
8. How does the lesson of thinking like a mountain relate to the land ethic?