

CONSERVATION

Beautification Edens Lost and Found,

Resource Conservation The Loop, The Future of Life, Blessed Unrest, Guns, Germs & Steel

(Fiction) The Loop, by Nicholas Evans

From the author of *The Horse Whisperer* comes the phenomenal #1 New York Times bestseller, an extraordinary new novel of love, family, and man's struggle with the wild.

A pack of wolves makes a sudden savage return to the Rocky Mountain ranching town of Hope, Montana, where a century earlier they were slaughtered by the thousands. Biologist Helen Ross has come to Hope from the East, fleeing a life in shambles, determined to save the wolves from those who seek to destroy them. But an ancient hatred awaits her in Hope, a hatred that will tear a family and ultimately the community apart. And soon Helen is at the center of the storm, by loving the wrong man, by defying the wrong man . . . by daring to lead a town out of the violent darkness of its past. . . .

This is a novel that considers what happens when the natural world collides with the human world . . . Evans does a nice job of presenting both sides of an emotional issue. The author's observations of both human and lupine behavior are deftly integrated in this entertaining and satisfying novel. (St. Louis Post-Dispatch)

Edens Lost and Found: How a New Generation of Urban Activists Is Restoring Our Great American Cities by Harry Wiland, et al

Beautifully illustrated, *Edens Lost & Found* tells the stories of people who improve the quality of life in their cities by reclaiming abandoned land and transforming it into visions of Eden. Award-winning filmmakers Harry Wiland and Dale Bell go to four American cities—Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Seattle—in search of nature, and find it. Through many small acts of heroism, activism, and leadership, neighborhoods come together and build landscapes of beauty and delight.

The Future of Life by Edward O. Wilson

From one of the world's most influential scientists (and two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning author) comes his most timely and important book yet: an impassioned call for quick and decisive action to save Earth's biological heritage, and a plan to achieve that rescue. There are a staggering number of species on Earth, and half may go extinct by century's end. Pulitzer Prize-winning biologist Wilson is one of our most eloquent spokesmen for the necessity of conserving Earth's dwindling biological heritage, for reasons as much practical as sentimental and moral. Letting species disappear while hoping someday to re-

create them in the test tube, he says, is tantamount to destroying great masterpieces, knowing we have copies. We must not only celebrate nature's beauty and spiritual virtues but also be prepared to argue for its value in economic terms. A hardened veteran of policy debates, Wilson knows how to make a pragmatic case for conserving biodiversity. This beautifully written book is many things: It is a bracing wake-up call about the ecological catastrophe that is looming on our horizon, an inspiring exhortation to accept our responsibility as nature's stewards and a realistic blueprint for reversing the current extinction trend—that is, saving species and ecosystems in ways that generate, rather than impede, economic growth. The future of life may be bleak, Wilson warns, but it remains in our hands to save it.

The Future of Life by Edward Wilson is an informative and well-balanced novel with a powerful message about the impact human beings have had and are continuing to have upon Earth. The book is great for those with a love of the environment, and even better for people who do not understand the value of, or place any importance on the natural world. Wilson describes the bottleneck the human race is facing as caused by an ever-expanding population and ever-dwindling natural resources. He maintains that corrective action must be taken to curb the mass extinctions currently taking place as a direct result of humanity passing through this bottleneck. However, Wilson does not stop at merely stating the problem. He spends the last chapter of the book, appropriately titled 'The Solution' describing the path and policies that humans must adopt to reverse the trend of destructive exploitation of the natural world. Wilson takes care to explain both sides of the issue, and doesn't use the book as a platform for blaming capitalism for destroying the environment. In the first chapter, 'The Bottleneck', he writes about the stereotypical 'Economist' and 'Environmentalist' viewpoints and states that both are overly dramatized. Throughout the book, he presents arguments that balance the need of aiding the economy and the environment, as seen by the statement: "No one can be expected to leave a reserve inviolate if it is his source of food and fuel. A patch of forest fenced off and patrolled is a cruel insult to hungry people shut out, and unworkable in the long run" (168). He then explains methods for making conservation profitable for those who must practice it directly. The chapter "How Much is the Biosphere Worth" addresses this issue well. Wilson makes it clear that a forest is worth far more than the lumber it is harvested for, as with the example of the Catskill Watershed that provides water purification for New York City, a service worth billions of dollars. The final chapter, "The Solution", contains a thorough description of past, present, and future methods for conserving the biodiversity of the planet. Wilson discusses the growing influence of nongovernmental organizations like Conservation International and their efforts to protect greater stretches of wilderness. He then lists eleven key elements that humanity needs to implement to save the biosphere, from "complete the mapping of the world's biological diversity" to "use biodiversity more effectively to benefit the world economy as a whole"(162-3). Taken together, these elements are certainly a tall order, but they do a thorough job of addressing the key issues raised by Wilson. *On a technical note, the novel is not always easy to read. Many passages are written in the passive voice, making comprehension of some of Wilson's ideas more difficult than they might be otherwise. Also, some of his claims on global warming and extinction are stated as known fact without a mention of a source: "More frequent heat waves, violent storms, forest fires, droughts, and flooding damage are the spawn of the historically unprecedented pace of climate change" (68). It is hard to determine the source of other data that is pulled from studies and academic*

papers but not directly cited in the text because the facts are not footnoted, and are simply listed by page number in a notes appendix in the back of the book. Aside from these few weak points, the book is strong, and the majority of his arguments are backed up and illustrated well. A good example is the discussion of deforestation as taken from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. The data cited says that the “worldwide rate of clear cutting [of tropical rainforests] has been close to 1% per year. Where all tropical rainforests occupy approximately equal to the lower forty-eight United States, they are being removed at the rate of half the state of Florida every year” (59-60). Wilson’s land analogy makes the frightening data easy for any American to comprehend. Taken as a whole, this book is an eye opener for anyone who may not be aware of the perilous state humans have created on a global level on our planet. For the environmentally conscience, it provides a clearer picture of what must be done to repair our planet. In general, it is a good education for any human being that must exist on this planet with other life. I think Wilson states it best on page 68 when he says, “Perhaps the time has come to cease calling it the ‘environmentalist’ view as though it were a lobbying effort outside the mainstream of human activity and to start calling it the real-world view”.

Blessed Unrest: How the Largest Social Movement in History Is Restoring Grace, Justice, and Beauty to the World by Paul Hawken

The New York Times bestselling examination of the worldwide movement for social and environmental change Paul Hawken has spent more than a decade researching organizations dedicated to restoring the environment and fostering social justice. From billion-dollar nonprofits to single-person dot.causes, these groups collectively comprise the largest movement on earth, a movement that has no name, leader, or location and that has gone largely ignored by politicians and the media.

Blessed Unrest explores the diversity of the movement, its brilliant ideas, innovative strategies, and centuries of hidden history. A culmination of Hawken's many years of leadership in the environmental and social justice fields, it will inspire all who despair of the world's fate, and its conclusions will surprise even those within the movement itself. (Jane Goodall)

Blessed Unrest is exciting, compelling and very important. . . . It will inspire and encourage millions more to take action.

Guns, Germs & Steel: The Fates of Human Societies by Jared Diamond DVD (Barnes & Noble)

Originally published in 1997, Jared Diamond's Pulitzer Prize-winning book *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* represents a landmark of scholarly synthesis. Reviewing societal clashes such as the Spanish conquest of the Aztecs, Diamond employs modern understanding of technology and biology as well as geography and economics to analyze cultural hegemony in its most brutally Darwinian form. "Guns, germs, and steel," Diamond argues, are the keys to understanding the course of human civilization. Produced in wide-screen format and originally aired over PBS in the summer of 2005, *Guns, Germs, and Steel* is a thorough and thrilling exploration of the author's themes. Shot across five continents, the three-part film employs dramatic re-creations as well as insights from prominent anthropologists, archaeologists, biologists, historians,

and other scholars. In Episode 1, "Out of Eden," Diamond posits the theory that access to domesticated animals and plant cultivation played bigger roles in societal development than race, creed, time, and experience. "Conquest," the second installment, focuses on the Europe's hostile takeover of the Americas and the impact of weapons and disease in shaping the plunder. The series closes in Africa with "Into the Tropics," tracing the continent's colonization by Europeans and South Africans, and explaining why geography remains to this day a determining factor in resource distribution. Interactive maps, timelines, and a photo gallery round out this National Geographic Society DVD presentation. Barnes & Noble

Winged Migration a.k.a. Le Peuple Migrateur, Travelling Birds

DVD (Barnes & Noble)

An odyssey over three years in the making, *Winged Migration* certainly is an amazing experience to behold. Its most impressive and moving achievement is its ability to draw the viewer into an almost foreign world, traveling along with a myriad of bird species as they undertake their semiannual migrations over vast distances. Just as *MicroCosmos* placed the viewer into an ant-sized world where blades of grass loomed like skyscrapers, *Winged Migration* offers the world through birds' eyes. We're on the ground with them as they interact, look for sustenance, and care for their young; and we're in the air with the birds as they dauntlessly fly high and low above the earth and sea. The film is also a tour of the globe that reveals gorgeous landscapes that most humans never get to see. One of the most unexpected delights of the film is listening to the many and varying voices of these creatures as they communicate with each other; it's almost like a music track all its own. As far as the actual music and score of the film, it is a mixed bag. Some musical choices interact nicely with the visuals, while many are overwrought and distracting. Usually the most effective moments are either without music or accompanied with minimalist compositions. The thrill of flying with the birds is countered with the depiction of the disasters and impediments that they face on a daily basis. Exhaustion, natural predators, hunters, broken wings, and human factory pollution are among the many obstacles that claim the lives of migrating birds; sometimes less than half of them actually make it to their destinations. One of the most jarring moments in the film is when a gunshot rings out and one of the birds goes limp and falls out of the sky, followed by several more of its companions. The shock of these deaths is joined with the slow realization that another bird is not going to make it out of the industrial waste near a factory, that a baby can be snatched and eaten right in front of its parents' eyes, and that a broken-winged bird is going to become the dinner for a horde of crabs. But these disturbing moments are infrequent, and the main focus of the film is to portray the grandeur of birds in general. Completely unlike the conventional nature documentary, *Winged Migration* is not about teaching cool facts about mating habits or details about one specific bird. Other than informing us of the distance and path of each bird's migration, there is little else offered to satiate our scientific curiosity. Although there are a few instances in which it would be nice to learn the reasons for certain actions of a bird or where the film cuts away from an enthralling interaction, *Winged Migration* keeps its focus broad. In this way, the film is very effective in creating an intimate, poetic portrait that conveys the majesty of all birds. Dana Rowader All Movie Guide

(Conservation) Nova: World in the Balance - the Population Paradox

DVD (Barnes & Noble)

1. India's Challenges [10:24]
 2. The Heart of the Problem: Gender [12:20]
 3. The Aging of Japan [13:53]
 4. The Hourglass of Sub-Saharan Africa [12:57]
 5. A Demographic Phenomenon to Strive For [6:51]
1. The Problem of Affluence [11:25]
 2. Experiments and Energy [11:50]
 3. The Car, the Individual [11:44]
 4. Land and Water [10:05]
 5. China's Environmental Dilemma [10:56]

BARAKA DVD (Barnes & Noble)

Named after a Sufi word that translates roughly as "breath of life" or "blessing," Baraka is [Ron Fricke's](#) impressive follow-up to [Godfrey Reggio's](#) non-verbal documentary film *Koyaanisqatsi*. Fricke was cinematographer and collaborator on Reggio's film, and for Baraka he struck out on his own to polish and expand the photographic techniques used on *Koyaanisqatsi*. The result is a tour-de-force in 70mm: a cinematic "guided meditation" (Fricke's own description) shot in 24 countries on six continents over a 14-month period that unites religious ritual, the phenomena of nature, and man's own destructive powers into a web of moving images. Fricke's camera ranges, in meditative slow motion or bewildering time-lapse, over the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, the Ryoan-Ji temple in Kyoto, Lake Natron in Tanzania, burning oil fields in Kuwait, the smoldering precipice of an active volcano, a busy subway terminal, tribal celebrations of the Masai in Kenya, chanting monks in the Dip Tse Chok Ling monastery...and on and on, through locales across the globe. To execute the film's time-lapse sequences, Fricke had a special camera built that combined time-lapse photography with perfectly controlled movements of the camera. In one evening sequence a desert sky turns black, and the stars roll by, as the camera moves slowly forward under the trees. The feeling is like that of viewing the universe through a powerful telescope: that we are indeed on a tiny orb hurtling through a star-filled void. The film is complemented by the hybrid world-music of [Michael Stearns](#). Anthony Reed, All Movie Guide