

Trefethen, James B., *An American Crusade for Wildlife* (New York: Winchester Press, 1975), 409 pages.

This is not just another ecology book. But it is a book about ecology. This is not just another crusader's appeal for conservation. But it does make many eloquent pleas. For most of us, "ecology" used to mean nature's system anywhere except in our own backyards. Now we know differently. What makes Trefethen's book so worthwhile is that it takes us from our backyards to beyond, from the 1800's to tomorrow. The American crusade for wildlife is a broad but detailed picture of many people in many place. Trefethen paints the picture well.

The picture is partly symbolic, partly poetic, but always very real. The story of the buffalo which opens the book gives us in microcosm the pattern for the whole book. "In its destruction as a free-roaming animal," says Trefethen, "the buffalo carried the seeds of its own survival and that of a number of other species that otherwise might have passed from the American scene."

The American scene is what makes this book so very interesting. In isolated instances of ecological catastrophes we easily lose sight of national, even continental, efforts to save and nurture wildlife. Trefethen's study reaches from the Appalachians to Alaska, from California to Canada, yet always there is a sense that the parts are of one piece.

The crusade has been as vast as America itself. And "crusade" is a word which makes many of us suspicious. For there to be a crusade, there has to be a foe. I was afraid that this book would be another "we have met the enemy and he is us" tirade, but it isn't. The perspective is always "crusade for," not "crusade against." Trefethen doesn't forget that the enemy is us, but he remembers who our friends are, and they are most important here.

Many of my friends I've never met: bald eagles, bighorn sheep, giant sequoias, caribou, dolphins, sea otters, turkey vultures. I enjoy meeting them in this book, and I am glad to think that in part because of books like this one they may be around for me to meet in the wild. Trefethen has a long appendix listing names of birds and mammals. I wondered, what for? When I finished the book, I knew what for. It is a checklist of national treasures. Some on the list are lost forever, as irretrievable as a burned painting or a crushed jewel. But it is more, far more, than mere cultural deprivation.

No chapter better makes this point than "Wildlife of the Seas." This is a moving chapter that is full of surprises. Read it before you plaster your bumper with "save the whales" stickers. Read it before you boycott the tuna industry that destroys dolphins and porpoises, before you rush a donation to help stop the slaughter of harp seals, "a creature nearer to a living toy than any other created." Read it in order to know what are the

intelligent courses of action to take when joining the American crusade for wildlife.

This book has an obvious audience: outdoorsmen, conservationists, and students of ecology. The not-so-obvious audience is those of us who might want to join the crusade from the comfort of our armchairs but really don't know how. Trefethen tells us how in an honest, balanced, and appealing way.

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