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No Man's Garden: Thoreau And A New Vision For Civilization And Nature

Daniel B. Botkin

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In No Man's Garden, ecologist Daniel Botkin takes a fresh look at the life and writings of Henry David Thoreau to discover a model for reconciling the conflict between nature and civilization that lies at the heart of our environmental problems. He offers an insightful reinterpretation of Thoreau, drawing a surprising picture of the "hermit of Walden" as a man who loved wildness, but who found it in the woods and swamps on the outskirts of town as easily as in the remote forests of Maine, and who firmly believed in the value and importance of human beings and civilization.

Botkin integrates into the familiar image of Thoreau, the solitary seeker, other, equally important aspects of his personality and career-as a first-rate ecologist whose close, long-term observation of his surroundings shows the value of using a scientific approach, as an engineer who was comfortable working out technical problems in his father's pencil factory, and as someone who was deeply concerned about the spiritual importance of nature to people.

This new view of one of the founding fathers of American environmental thought lays the groundwork for an innovative approach to solving environmental problems. Botkin argues that the topics typically thought of as "environmental," and the issues and concerns of "environmentalism," are in fact rooted in some of humanity's deepest concerns-our fundamental physical and spiritual connection with nature, and the mutually beneficial ways that society and nature can persist together. He makes the case that by understanding the true scientific, philosophical, and spiritual bases of environmental positions we will be able to develop a means of preserving the health of our biosphere that simultaneously allows for the further growth and development of civilization.

No Man's Garden presents a vital challenge to the assumptions and conventional wisdom of environmentalism, and will be must reading for anyone interested in developing a deeper understanding of interactions between humans and nature.

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