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Spring 2002

## Review of *The Essential Aldo Leopold: Quotations and Commentaries* Edited by Curt D. Meine and Richard L. Knight

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Dunlap, Thomas R., "Review of *The Essential Aldo Leopold: Quotations and Commentaries* Edited by Curt D. Meine and Richard L. Knight" (2002). *Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and Social Sciences*. 600.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

**The Essential Aldo Leopold: Quotations and Commentaries.** Edited by Curt D. Meine and Richard L. Knight. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999. xxii+350 pp. Photos, notes, bibliographical references. \$27.95 cloth.

A book of quotations is always suspect, and one on Leopold doubly so. The form suggests hagiography, which Leopold scholarship does not need, or the desire to make accessible an important but obscure body of thought, which is not the case with Leopold. Even more alarming, the editors have arranged Leopold's ideas into categories, although one of his great strengths was his willingness to think across intellectual boundaries. Dipping into the collection, however, allays all fears. This volume gives the general reader a good, well-organized look at Leopold's ideas. Scholars get a lot more: a wealth of quotations for lectures and papers, an arrangement that allows a quick look at changes in Leopold's thought, and a whole that provides a helpful guide to his developing ideas.

The volumes' three sections—"Conservation Science and Practice," "Conservation Policy," and "Conservation and Culture"—roughly correspond to Leopold's major concerns as he moved from the conventional conservation of his formal education to the much wider horizons of his later years. Sections are divided into topics ranging from the severely practical and conventional ("Agriculture") through the academic ("Arts and Sciences") and on to ones whose ideas Leopold anticipated but whose names he never knew ("Biodiversity and Conservation Biology" and "Environmental History"). Within each topic, quotations appear chronologically by publication date, for unpublished work by date of composition. Since the editors have chosen commentators ranging from experts to enthusiasts to introduce each topic, contributions vary from serious reflections to anecdotes. While this may disappoint scholars, they will have much else to be happy about.

The editors have looked through Leopold's speeches, papers, manuscripts, reports, and articles—the full range of his writing—and made excellent selections. As one who has been reading Leopold's work for years and has inspected various archives, I not only found old favorites but variants and new formulations. The arrangement by subject and date makes it easy to see the range of Leopold's thought and to follow main lines of development. The reader can compare versions of ideas, and, by flipping to other sections, see how Leopold presented the same topic to different audiences or examined it from a different perspective. All that is obviously lacking is an index which would have allowed the reader to trace subjects, such as native species or predators, important for our ideas about nature and for understanding Leopold but not central enough to have their own section.

This is an impressive volume, of interest to anyone who has read *A Sand County Almanac* and found, as Terry Tempest Williams put it, that “Aldo Leopold spoke to me.” Here is the full range of that voice, well chosen and arranged, with some good photographs as a bonus. Keep *The Essential Aldo Leopold* on a shelf close by. **Thomas R. Dunlap**, *Department of History, Texas A&M University*.