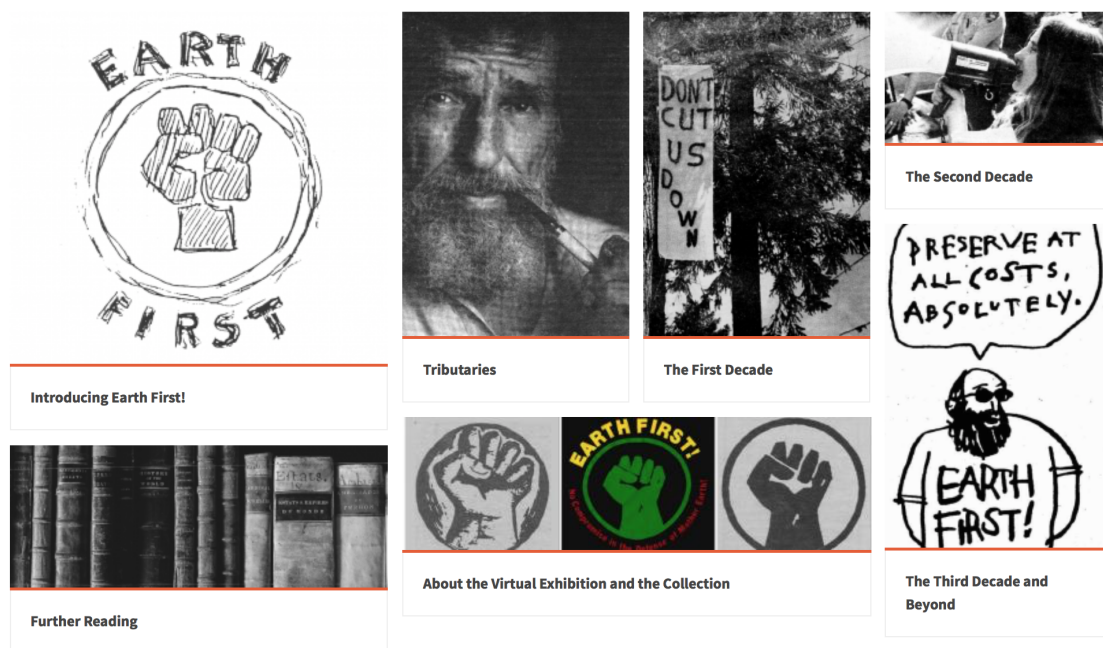


## Radical Environmentalism's Print History: From *Earth First!* to *Wild Earth*

by Bron Taylor

This exhibition sheds light on the publications of the radical environmental movement Earth First! and its offshoots. American scholar and conservationist Bron Taylor discusses the political and ethical history of the movement while highlighting the unique collection of Earth First! movement writings hosted on the Environment & Society Portal.



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<http://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/8109>

Thanks to Bron Taylor, the print publications featured in this exhibition, along with other journals, pamphlets, and ephemera from the Earth First! movement and its many offshoots are available at the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society in Munich, Germany. In addition to their availability of the [Environment & Society Portal](#), most of the collection's publications have also been digitally archived with the University Library's digital collections at LMU Munich. You can find them [here](#). Views expressed in these materials do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of the Rachel Carson Center or its partners.

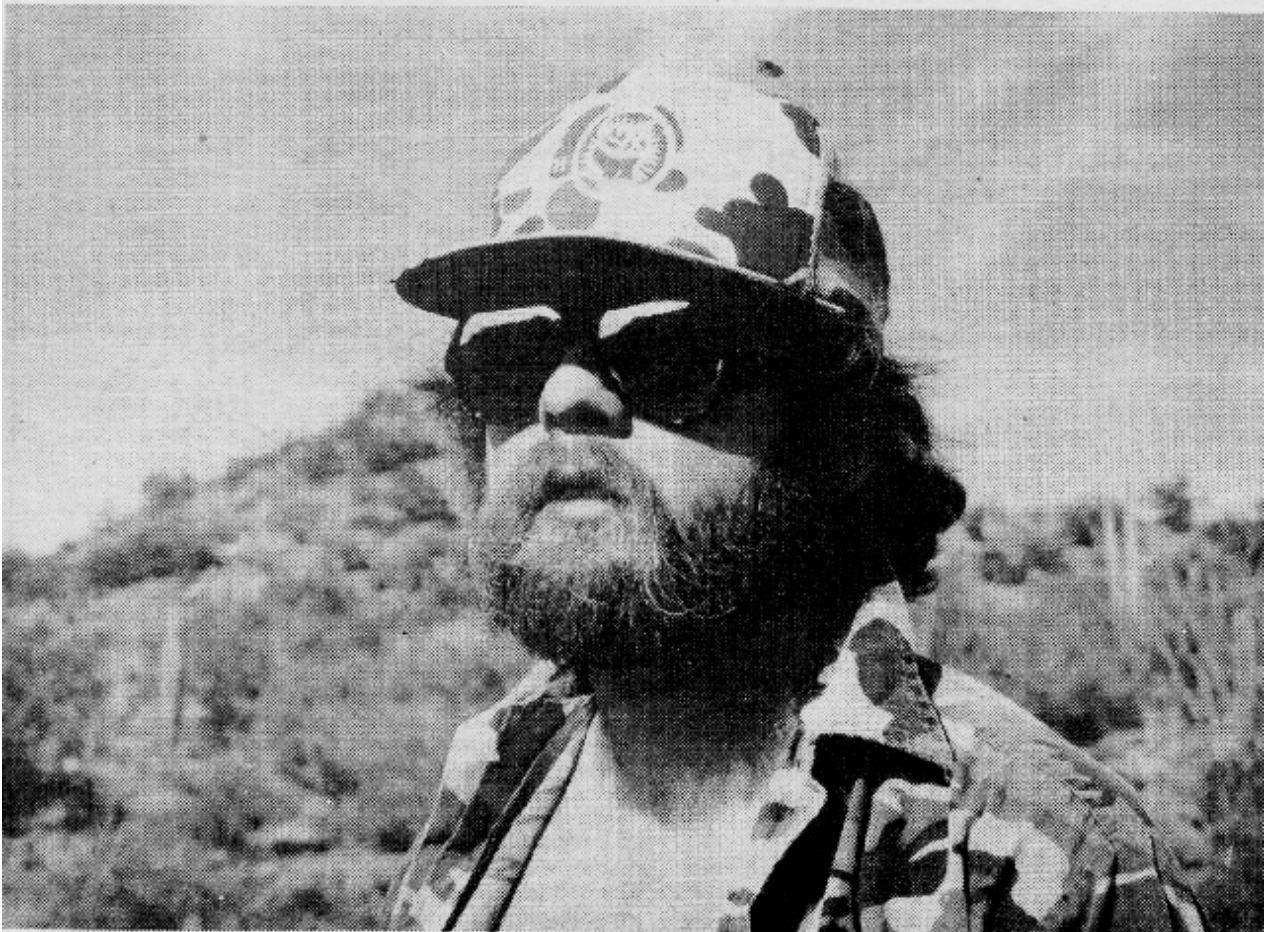
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## Introducing Earth First!



Dave Foreman's image was used in a 1985 journal ([Earth First! 5, no. 7](#)) to advertise Earth First!'s merchandise, which included camouflage baseball caps

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Earth First!, the best known of the so-called “radical environmental” groups, was founded in 1980 in the southwestern United States. Dave Foreman, who had been working for [The Wilderness Society](#), was the most charismatic and well-connected of the new movement's co-founders. He soon sent out a mimeographed announcement of the group, explaining that politics as usual—electoral politics and lobbying—had failed to significantly slow, let alone halt the destruction of the wilderness areas and a corresponding decline of the continent's biodiversity.

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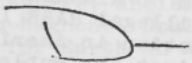
**Chapter:** Introducing Earth First!

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September 1, 1980

Memo To: the leading intellectual and literary lights of EARTH FIRST

From: Dave Foreman 

Re: EARTH FIRST Statement of Principles and Membership Brochure

Hey, buckaroos ... enclosed is a very rough draft of the above. Read it, add, delete, edit, throw it out and write your own. Rough as it is, I figure putting something down on paper will be the only way to get you all thinking about it. Feel free to criticize everything: concept, approach, grammar, spelling, whatever.

EARTH FIRST STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

- \* Wilderness has a right to exist for its own sake
- \* All life forms, from virus to the great whales, have an inherent and equal right to existence
- \* <sup>H</sup>Mankind is no greater than any other form of life and has no legitimate claim to dominate Earth
- \* Humankind, through overpopulation, anthropocentrism, industrialization, excessive energy consumption/resource extraction, state capitalism, father-figure hierarchies, imperialism, pollution, and natural area destruction, threatens the basic life processes of EARTH
- \* All human decisions should consider Earth first, humankind second
- \* The only true test of morality is whether an action, individual, social, or political, benefits Earth
- \* Humankind will be happier, healthier, more secure, and more comfortable in a society that recognizes humankind's true biological nature and which is in dynamic harmony with the total biosphere
- \* Political compromise has no place in the defense of Earth
- \* Earth is Goddess and the proper object of human worship

In the very first Earth First memo, founder Dave Foreman explains the conception and program of the then newly founded Earth First organization. Read the entire Statement of Principles and Membership Brochure [here](#).

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This first Earth First! logo with an added exclamation point, formulated in 1981 (see [Earth First! 1, no. 3](#))

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With the slogan, “No compromise in defense of mother earth!”—and punctuating their passion by putting an exclamation point at the end of their moniker Earth First!—Foreman and his comrades promoted the idea that every life form, and indeed every ecosystem, has intrinsic value and a right to live and flourish regardless of human interests. (In the parlance of environmental ethics this notion has been variously labeled as ecocentrism, biocentrism, and deep ecology.)

It was this ethical standpoint, combined with a view that democratic processes had broken down, weakened or were corrupted by corporate power and wealth, upon which Earth First!ers based their contention that extra-legal tactics in defense of threatened species and ecosystems were morally warranted. Soon, those drawn to the movement would put such convictions into practice, engaging in civil disobedience and sabotage as means to

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thwart environmentally destructive commercial enterprises and the governmental decisions that enabled them.

And before long, business leaders, politicians, law enforcement authorities, and many others would rise up to attack these activists, labeling them terrorists and working ardently to suppress their movement. The ensuing conflicts have been long, trenchant, wrenching, and sometimes violent.

# WILDERNESS WAR IN OREGON

## BLOCKADERS ASSAULTED BY BULLDOZER FOREMAN RUN DOWN BY TRUCK

"If you don't get out of the way, I'm going to kill you!" screamed Plumley Construction Company bulldozer operator Fred Brown to five Earth First!ers blocking his path at the end of the remote road in the Siskiyou National Forest near Grants Pass, Oregon. But the five, Diana Warren, Molly Campbell, William Smith, Peter Swanson and Doug Norlen, stood firm. Brown charged them time and again with the rear of his machine. Finally, he turned the big rig around and buried them with dirt from the blade. The fight for the North Kalmiopsis was, in Mike Roselle's words, "getting gnarly." (See associated stories for details on each blockade.)

The blockade to save 150,000 acres of remarkably diverse primeval forest had begun two weeks earlier on April 25 when Mike Roselle, Steve Marsden, Pedro Tama and Kevin Everhart had shut down operations on the Bald Mountain Road construction project for 3½ hours until Josephine County Sheriff's deputies arrived to arrest them. They were charged with disorderly conduct and spent the night in jail. The next day they were arraigned, given deferred sentencing and placed on probation for a year with the requirement that they not return to the construction area. They requested instead to do time but the judge ordered them out.

Nine days later, a group of seven Oregonians (Ric Bailey, Claudia Beausoliel, Roman Cooper, Mary Beth Nearing, Jim Goodwin, Ron Zook and Eric Nicholson) blockaded construction at the same site - but with a twist. They handcuffed and chained themselves to the bulldozer when the police arrived to achieve a 4½ hour shut-down. They were released from jail that day on their own recognizance. Kevin Everhart also was arrested for having been in the area. After spending another night in jail, he bailed out. The judge later dropped charges against him.

The Grants Pass Courier then featured an interview with bulldozer jockey Les Moore

continued on pg. 4



William Smith (hidden), Molly Campbell, Diana Warren, Peter Swanson and Doug Norlen pushed by bulldozers during Kalmiopsis Wilderness Blockade

Photo by Frank Siles

Earth First!ers Diana Warren, Molly Campbell, Peter Swanson, William Smith, and Doug Norlen facing a bulldozer during the Kalmiopsis Wilderness blockade to save 150,000 acres of primeval forest. All were arrested, arraigned, and placed on probation with restraining orders issued against them. See [Earth First! 3, no. 5](#).

Photograph by Frank Siles

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## 700 ARRESTED IN AUSTRALIA



Bob Brown, member of Parliament, and others before arrest on Franklin River, Tasmania. John Seed is holding Earth First! flag.

### Australia Says "No!" To Franklin River Dam

Clearly, the world leadership in wilderness preservation has passed to Australia. While the environmental establishment in the United States preaches moderation and practices meekness, the "Greenies" of Down Under are taking courageous/exemplary action to protect their wilderness and are sending the world a message—a message of the path of right action which must be taken to safeguard natural diversity.

Last issue, John Seed reported in these pages on the successful effort of Australians to blockade the logging of the Nightcap rainforest and have it declared a National Park. One hundred and thirty were arrested before victory came. In the fall, Seed and others moved down to the island state of Tasmania to join the Tasmanian Wilderness Society (TWS) in the battle against the destruction of the wild Franklin and Gordon Rivers by a billion dollar dam in the heart of one of the world's most precious wildernesses.

By early February over 700 people had been arrested for trespass on HEC (Tasmanian Hydro Electric Commission) territory in the remote temperate rainforest wilderness at the juncture of the Gordon and

Franklin. Among those arrested was Bob Brown, member of the Australian Parliament and "1982 Australian of the Year." The trespassers face 6 months in prison. David Bellamy, an English botanist, and others were on a hunger strike in a Hobart jail. 15,000 people marched through Melbourne in November in protest of the dam (this was the largest rally in Australia since the Vietnam War). Even Prince Charles has come out in opposition.

In a Tasmanian state referendum on which of two different *dam* sites were preferred, 40% wrote in "no dams" on their ballots and in a show of support, 40.4% of the voters in the state of Victoria wrote "No Dams" across their ballots in a parliamentary election. John Seed reports that over 70 branches of the Tasmanian Wilderness Society have sprung up around Australia. The dam has become a major national political issue as the Greenies attempt to force the Federal Government of Australia to override the Tasmanian State Government and save the Wild Rivers National Park of Southwest Tasmania (a recent Gallup Poll indicates that 55% of all Australians want such intervention with less than 20% opposed.)

*Continued on page 6*

This article about the arrests of 700 Australian Earth First!ers protesting the damming of the Franklin River in Tasmania shows the spread of the movement and its values beyond the United States. See [Earth First! 3, no. 3](#).

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Soon after Earth First!'s founding, its mimeographed announcement morphed into *Earth First!: The Radical Environmental Journal*, which is now available in full, [here](#) on the Environment & Society Portal. While much has been written about this movement and its influence on environmental politics in the United States and other countries, there is no better way—apart from having been present when these activists gather to play, plot strategy, or protest—to get a visceral feel for the movement than by perusing the journal. Yet the pages of the journal may be more intelligible with some background about the events that gave rise to the movement and an overview of some of the watershed moments in its history.

### Websites linked in this text:

- <https://wilderness.org/>
- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/mml/collection/11571>

### Websites linked in image captions:

- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/mml/earth-first-5-no-7>
- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/mml/earth-first-statement-principles-and-membership-brochure-memo>
- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/mml/earth-first-1-no-3>
- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/mml/earth-first-3-no-5>
- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/mml/earth-first-3-no-3>

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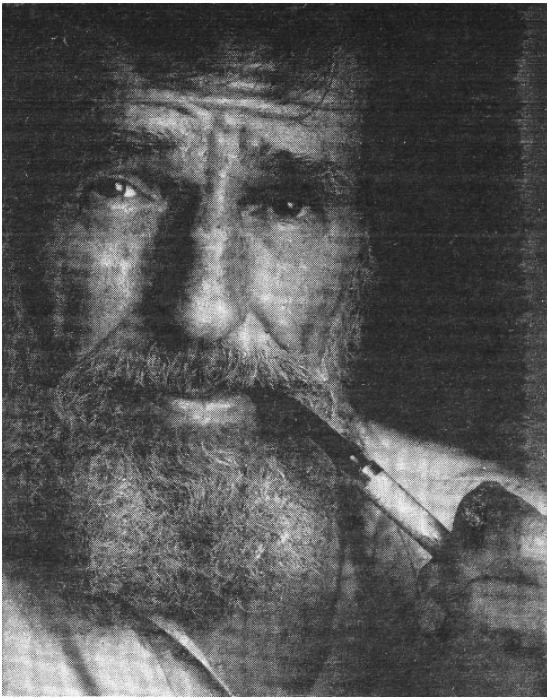
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## Tributaries of Radical Environmentalism before Earth First!

The event that precipitated the formation of Earth First! was a devastating defeat in the late 1970s at the end of the US Forest Service's "Roadless Area Review and Evaluation" process, in which the Forest Service refused to grant the designation of "wilderness" to areas that many conservationists considered biologically important. But the seeds of radical environmentalism had already sprouted long before then. As early as the 1950s there were scattered incidents of sabotage in the United States in defiance of environmentally destructive and aesthetically displeasing commercial enterprises. Some of these were reflected in the writings of the Southwestern writer [Edward Abbey](#), first subtly, in his classic memoir *Desert Solitaire* (1968).



Edward Abbey. See [Earth First! 9, no. 5](#).

© *Earth First!* Journal

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In it, while ruminating on his time as a park ranger at Utah's Arches National Monument (now a national park), Abbey alluded to late-night sabotage campaigns by wilderness lovers that had begun in the late 1950s. Soon Abbey published [The Monkey Wrench Gang](#) (1975), a novel about a band of passionate if crazed and angry environmentalists who roamed the deserts of the Southwest, destroying billboards, bulldozers, and conspiring to blow up Arizona's Glen Canyon Dam to liberate the Colorado River, which they felt had been unjustly incarcerated behind it. Abbey combined evocative, pantheistic writing about the sublime value of nature, with a unique form of libertarian anarchism that resonated with biocentrism, and by so doing, inspired many of those who formed Earth First! Earlier nature writers, especially Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, and Aldo Leopold, also helped to kindle the movement, as did a host of writers who from the 1960s onward provided strong critiques of mechanistic, hierarchal, patriarchal, monotheistic, agricultural-industrial-capitalist societies, especially Rachel Carson, Paul Shepard, Louis Mumford, Lynn White Jr., and Roderick Nash.

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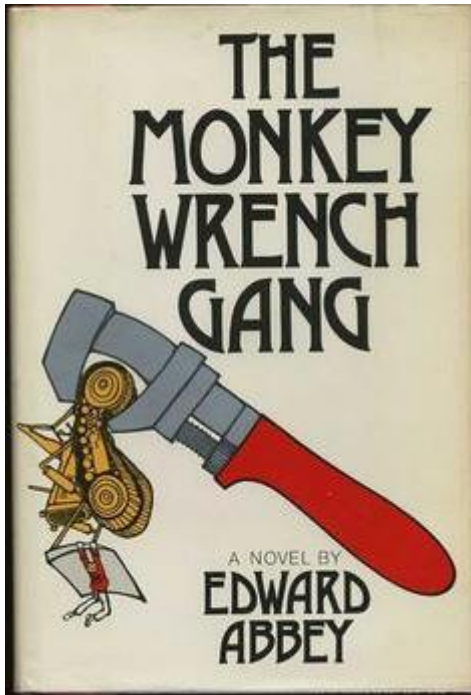
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The original exhibition includes an interactive gallery of authors and books that have inspired the Earth First! movement. View the items on the following pages.



Abbey, Edward. *The Monkey Wrench Gang*. Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, 1975.

When the cities are gone, he thought, and all the ruckus has died away, when sunflowers push up through the concrete and asphalt of the forgotten interstate freeways, when the Kremlin and the Pentagon are turned into nursing homes for generals, presidents and other such shitheads, when the glass-aluminum skyscraper tombs of Phoenix Arizona barely show above the sand dunes, why then, why then, why then by God maybe free men and wild women on horses, free women and wild men, can roam the sagebrush canyonlands in freedom—goddammit!—herding the feral cattle into box canyons, and gorge on bloody meat and bleeding fucking internal organs, and dance all night to the music of fiddles! banjos! steel guitars! by the light of a reborn moon!—by God, yes! Until, he reflected soberly, and bitterly, and sadly, until the next ice age and iron comes down, and the engineers and the farmers and the general motherfuckers come back again.

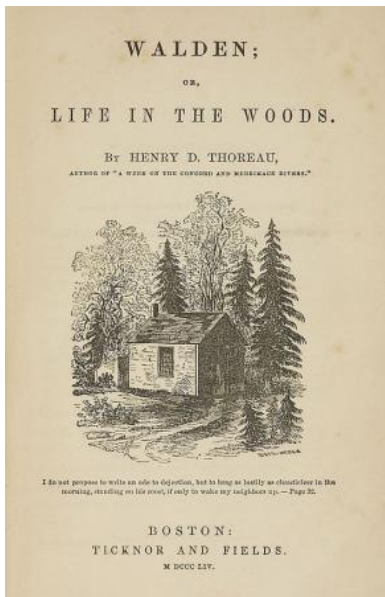
— Edward Abbey in *The Monkey Wrench Gang*

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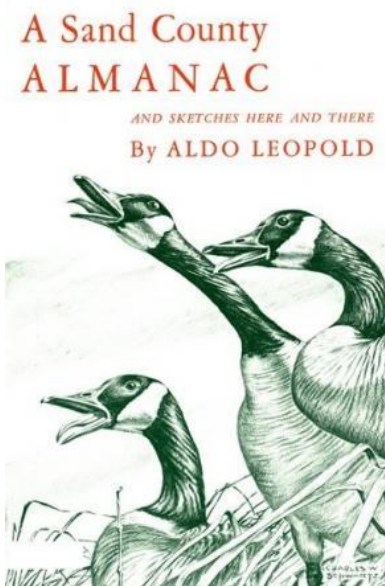
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Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*. Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1854.

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion.

— Henry David Thoreau in *Walden*.



Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1949.

One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds. Much of the damage inflicted on land is quite invisible to laymen. An ecologist must either harden his shell and make believe that the consequences of science are none of his business, or he must be the doctor who sees the marks of death in a community that believes itself well and does not want to be told otherwise.

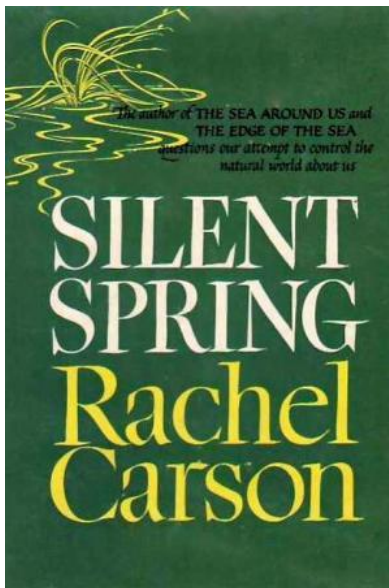
— Aldo Leopold in *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There*

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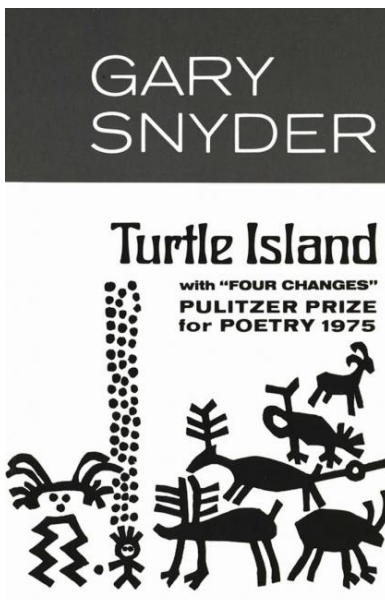
Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962.

Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will ensure as long as life lasts. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature — the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter.

[...]

A Who's Who of pesticides is therefore of concern to us all. If we are going to live so intimately with these chemicals eating and drinking them, taking them into the very marrow of our bones - we had better know something about their nature and their power.

— Rachel Carson in *Silent Spring*



Snyder, Gary. *Turtle Island*. New York: A New Directions Bookm, 1974.

“Goal: Clean air, clean clear-running rivers, the presence of Pelican and Osprey and Gray Whale in our lives; salmon and trout in our streams; unmuddied language and good dreams.”

— Gary Snyder in *Turtle Island*

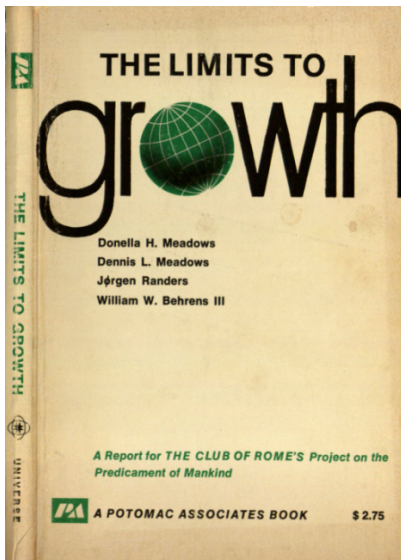
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Donella H. Meadows et al. *The Limits to Growth*, New York: Universe Books, 1972.

People don't need enormous cars; they need admiration and respect. They don't need a constant stream of new clothes; they need to feel that others consider them to be attractive, and they need excitement and variety and beauty. People don't need electronic entertainment; they need something interesting to occupy their minds and emotions. And so forth. Trying to fill real but nonmaterial needs—for identity, community, self-esteem, challenge, love, joy—with material things is to set up an unquenchable appetite for false solutions to never-satisfied longings. A society that allows itself to admit and articulate its nonmaterial human needs, and to find nonmaterial ways to satisfy them, would require much lower material and energy throughputs and would provide much higher levels of human fulfillment.

— Donella H. Meadows in *The Limits to Growth: The 30-Year Update*

Likewise, the [tributaries of radical environmentalism](#) included diverse streams of the American counterculture, which incubated in the 1950s and emerged as a powerful cultural force in the 1960s. Its elements included a deep suspicion of, if not outright antipathy towards, the religious and philosophical underpinnings of Western culture, which was said to obviate a proper understanding of sacredness and kinship of all life and to be linked to a repressive patriarchal order. Offered as alternatives, variously, were worldviews rooted in indigenous traditions (especially American Indians), recently revitalized pagan religions, or religions originating in Asia, as well as understandings emerging from ecology and new sciences ranging from quantum and complexity theory to conservation biology and the [Gaia hypothesis](#). These diverse streams were all said to recognize the interrelatedness and mutual dependence of all life and to provide better ethical guideposts than Western civilization with its sky gods, philosophical dualism, and reductionist science. Fused to this were leftist or anarchist political ideologies, and sometimes a corresponding revolutionary fervor, envisioning the overthrow or eventual collapse of a putatively authoritarian and environmentally unsustainable capitalist nation-state.

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Good	Bad
Foraging (or small-scale organic horticultural) societies	Pastoral and Agricultural Societies
Animistic, Pantheistic, Indigenous, Goddess-Matriarchal, or Asian Religions	Monotheistic, Sky-God, Patriarchal, Western Religions
Biocentrism/Ecocentrism/Kinship Ethics (promotes conservation)	Anthropocentrism (promotes destruction)
Intuition	Reason (especially instrumental)
Holistic Worldviews	Mechanistic & Dualistic Worldviews
Decentralism	Centralization
Primitive Technology	Modern Technology
Regional Self-Sufficiency	Globalization and International Trade
Anarchism/Bioregionalism/ Participatory Democracy	Hierarchy/Nation-States/ Corruption/Authoritarianism
Radicalism	Pragmatism

Binary associations typical of radical environmentalism. Adapted from the article “[Radical Environmentalism](#)” in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, ed. Bron Taylor (London & New York: Continuum, 2005).

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No one better exemplified or promoted the general thrust of these critiques than the poet/philosopher [Gary Snyder](#), who had been deeply involved in the San Francisco counterculture. In his remarkably innovative (and eventually, Pulitzer Prize-winning) book of poetry and prose, *Turtle Island* (1969), Snyder advanced an animistic and biocentric spirituality influenced by American Indian cultures and shaped by his long-standing Buddhist practice. He fused these spiritual views to a decentralist, anarchist ideology inspired by Petr Kropotkin and the International Workers of the World (a.k.a. the Wobblies) that he and others innovatively labeled Bioregionalism, which sought to reconfigure political loyalties and revive a sense of connectedness with the watersheds and

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ecosystems people inhabit and to which they belong. This mix of nature-based spiritualities and decentralist political ideologies was a close countercultural cousin to Earth First!; the bioregionalists focused on creating environmentally sustainable and spirituality meaningful communities while Earth First!ers prioritized direct resistance to what they also considered the destructive force of Western civilization.



An Earth First! Tree. See [Earth First! 2, no. 3](#).

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Although there were differences and sometimes tensions between members of these movements, in the years preceding and following the invention of Earth First!, there was enough overlap in the ideas and people involved in Bioregionalism and Earth First! that the main elements of what could be called the worldview of radical environmentalism came into view.

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So, when Earth First! announced its arrival and intention to disrupt politics as usual, there was fertile countercultural ground upon which to draw. Indeed, in the early 1980s, there were many radicals without a cause, as the Cold War and nuclear anxieties had ebbed and Latin American revolutions were pacified, while environmental alarm, even apocalypticism, had continued to grow, fueled in part by the Club of Rome's landmark 1972 report titled *The Limits to Growth*. The stage was set for the dramatic entry of Earth First! into US environmental politics.

**Websites linked in this text:**

- <http://www.religionandnature.com/ern/sample/Loeffler--Abbey.pdf>
- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/mml/monkey-wrench-gang>
- [http://www.brontaylor.com/environmental\\_articles/pdf/Taylor--Tributaries.pdf](http://www.brontaylor.com/environmental_articles/pdf/Taylor--Tributaries.pdf)
- <http://www.religionandnature.com/ern/sample/Monaghan--Gaia.pdf>
- <http://www.religionandnature.com/ern/sample/Taylor,Bron--Snyder.pdf>
- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/mml/limits-growth-report-club-romes-project-predicament-mankind>

**Websites linked in image captions:**

- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/mml/earth-first-9-no-5>
- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/mml/monkey-wrench-gang>
- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/mml/walden-or-life-woods>
- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/mml/sand-county-almanac-and-sketches-here-and-there>
- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/mml/silent-spring>
- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/mml/limits-growth-report-club-romes-project-predicament-mankind>
- <http://www.religionandnature.com/ern/sample/Taylor--RadicalEnvironmentalism.pdf>
- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/mml/earth-first-2-no-3>

## The *Earth First!* Journal as a Gateway to Movement History

From its inception, the Earth First! movement prized robust debate. Although periodic controversies erupted about articles and views that were excluded from the pages of *Earth First!*—there has been an ongoing debate about whether the journal should be for outreach and therefore somewhat more moderate and without undue expression of internal disputes, or for internal, movement discussion, debate, and strategizing—reading it provides a good sense of the movement’s political and spiritual dimensions, campaigns, successes and failures, diversity, disputes, and schisms, and a window into the ways their adversaries and law enforcement authorities responded. It may be helpful to have some sense of what to look for when wading into this documentary record.

### The First Decade (1980-1990)

*Earth First!*’s first few years (1980–1983) were characterized by largely symbolic acts, outreach, and fledgling efforts to invent a fitting cultural infrastructure and identity, which was a contentious process that would become ongoing, and was the result of differing political, religious, and strategic visions, including what sorts of tactics would be discussed in the journal and deployed in the field.

Early on, at Foreman’s direction and insistence, *Earth First!* published according to a pagan calendar and its masthead announced that the movement did not accept the authority of the nation-state. At the same time, he and the movement’s founders dressed in Western cowboy garb and cultivated an image as “rednecks for wilderness.” This image went well with the macho notion that they were willing to wage a guerrilla campaign that would sabotage Earth’s destroyers, but it also early on engendered criticism for promoting an alienating, patriarchal, and violent ethos. Such criticisms would lead to intense debates in the coming years.

The original exhibition includes an interactive gallery of images of the Earth First! movement. View the items on the following pages.



Dave Foreman in a Cowboy Hat. See *Earth First!* 2, no. 2. © Earth First!

## Dave Foreman in a Cowboy Hat

Dave Foreman cultivating the image of Earth First!ers as "rednecks for wilderness."

Dave Foreman unleashes his tongue during this summer's 4th of July "Sagebrush Patriots' Rally" as he exposes the REAL traitors to the land: The "Sagebrush Rebels," and the corporate/industrial complex behind them.

See *Earth First!* 2, no. 2

Taylor, Bron. "Radical Environmentalism's Print History: From *Earth First!* to *Wild Earth*." Environment & Society Portal, *Virtual Exhibitions* 2018, no. 1. Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society. [doi.org/10.5282/rcc/7988](https://doi.org/10.5282/rcc/7988).

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Earth First! Macho Night in Jackson, Wy. Howie Wolke grins as he prepares to beat other EF!ers at arm wrestling. Howie surprised James G. Watt at the EF! demonstration outside the Western Governors' Conference when he reached over a Secret Service agent, took Watt's hand and said, "Mr. Secretary, I'm Howie Wolke and I organized the Anti-Watt rally over there."

Howie Wolke arm-wrestles at the Earth First! "Macho Night" in Jackson, Wyoming. See *Earth First!* 2, no. 2. © Earth First! © *Earth First!*

## Harvey Wolke Wrestling

Howie Wolke arm wrestling at an Earth First! "Macho Night" in Jackson, Wy.

Earth First! Macho Night in Jackson, Wy. Howie Wolke grins as he prepares to beat other EF!ers at arm wrestling. Howie surprised James G. Watt at the EF! demonstration outside the Western Governor's Conference when he reached over a Secret Service agent, took Watts' hand and said, "Mr. Secretary, I'm Howie Wolke and I organized the Anti-Watt rally over there."

See [Earth First! 2, no. 2](#).

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Except for a few copies we will be sending out to members who have paid for them, the Li'l Green Songbook is sold out. Johnny has been writing a lot of all-new original eco-radical tunes lately, and we are looking forward to publishing them

in an expanded version of his songbook. They will probably go for about \$4 each. Note: There's even a rumor that Johnny is planning on recording a best-selling LP one of these days!

© *Earth First!*

## Cowboy Johnny Sagebrush

Earth First!er Bart Koehler called his musical cowboy avatar "Johnny Sagebrush." He produced "The Earth First! Li'l Green Songbook" in 1981, officially published as "The Earth First! Li'l Green Songbook" in 1986.

Except for a few copies we will be sending out to members who have paid for them, the Li'l Green Songbook is sold out. Johnny has been writing a lot of all-new original eco-radical tunes lately, and we are looking forward to publishing them in an expanded version of his songbook. They will probably go for about 4\$ each. Note: There's even a rumor that Johnny is planning on recording a best-selling LP one of these days!

See [Earth First! 2, no. 2](#).

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© *Earth First!*

## Earth First! Mudmen

Two Earth First! “Mudmen” advertise a call for event and photo contributions for the “First Earth First! Earth Calendar,” which followed the pagan calendar.

Tired of calendars starting with January and ending with December? Year after monotonous year? Then rise up and throw off those shackles of bound conformity with the First Earth First! Earth Calendar. which begins this autumn with All Hallow’s Eve. From there we follow the grand old cycles of the Earth’s rhythm, as folks did in the days of yore. (Before all this insanity got going.) Help make this a truly seasoned effort. Send in your favorite dates, quotes, eco-catastrophes, Earth info, and any other terribly important data which you have been saving up for a time like this.

See [Earth First! 2, no. 3](#).

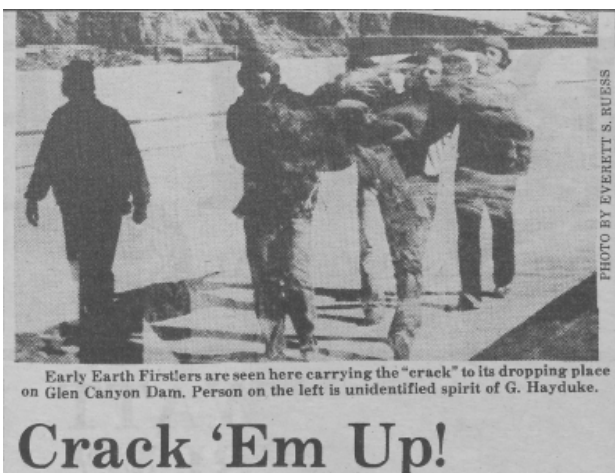
Taylor, Bron. “Radical Environmentalism’s Print History: From *Earth First!* to *Wild Earth*.” *Environment & Society Portal, Virtual Exhibitions* 2018, no. 1. Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society. [doi.org/10.5282/rcc/7988](https://doi.org/10.5282/rcc/7988).

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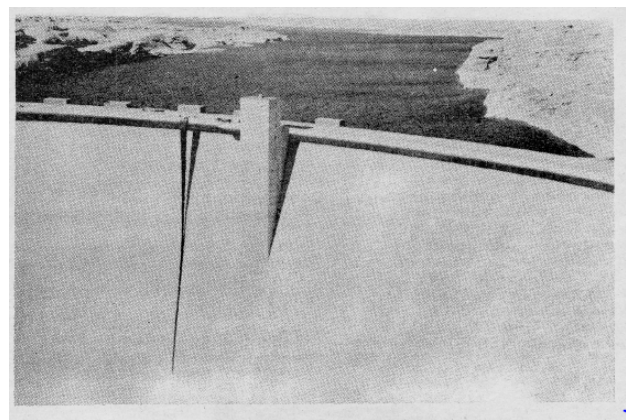
By 1982 Foreman and many others had been introduced to and enthusiastically embraced [deep ecology](#) , a biocentric philosophy first articulated a decade earlier by the Norwegian philosopher [Arne Naess](#) . Linking this philosophy to nature religions, Foreman wrote, “Deep Ecology is the most important philosophical current of our time,” and pledged to make Earth First! a forum for such philosophy as well as for “Earth religion in whatever guise.” He even contended that “all of us are religious, even atheists like [co-founder] Howie Wolke who deifies grizzly bears and hopes to become one” (in *Earth First! 2*, no. 8 , p. 2). Wolke considered such religious talk counterproductive and Foreman would eventually distance himself from earthen spiritualities, but given the presented image, it was not surprising that a very wide array of activists—rednecks and pagans, feminists and chauvinists, hippies and anarchists, social justice activists and misanthropes, ecologists and postmodern critics of science—would be drawn to the movement. This diversity and the contention it aroused was early and often expressed in *Earth First!*



According to [Wikipedia](#) , “On March 21, 1981 the radical environmental group Earth First! staged an anti-dam protest by unfurling a 300-foot (91 m) tapered black sheet of plastic down the face of the dam, making it appear as if a gigantic crack had appeared in the structure – a direct re-enactment of a scene from Abbey’s book. Authorities were unable to find the individuals responsible.” Symbolic acts such as these marked the first few years of the movement.

Photograph by Everett S. Ruess.

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Here, the plastic “crack” is suspended over Glen Canyon Dam. This was one of the earliest actions by Earth First!, and received a lot of attention despite its symbolic nature. See *Earth First! 2*, no. 4 .

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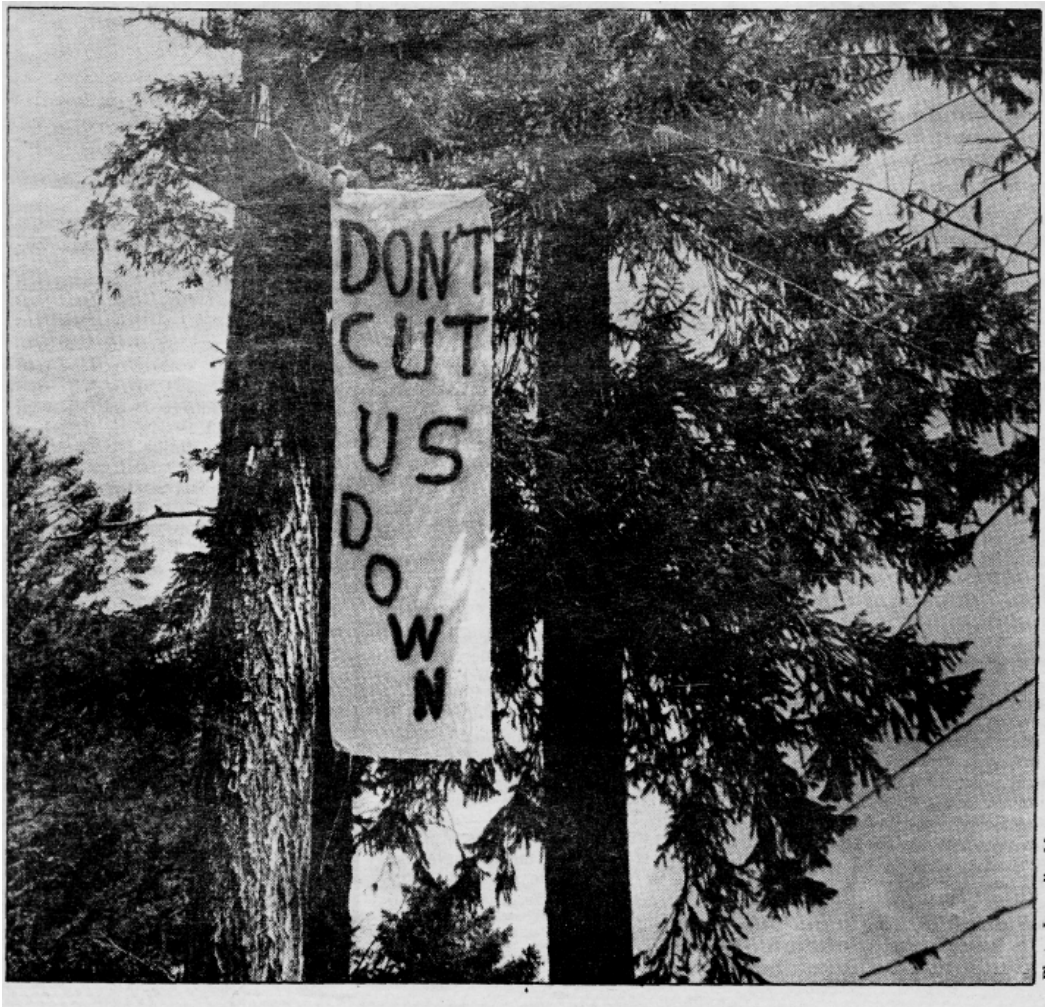
Taylor, Bron. “Radical Environmentalism’s Print History: From *Earth First!* to *Wild Earth*.” Environment & Society Portal, *Virtual Exhibitions* 2018, no. 1. Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society. [doi.org/10.5282/rcc/7988](https://doi.org/10.5282/rcc/7988).

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“Doug Fir,” a prodigious tree-climber, hangs a banner from an old growth tree in the Middle Santiam. See [Earth First! 5, no. 6](#) .

Photograph by Jacqueline Moreau.

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But these were also early years of tremendous energy and innovation. By 1983, the movement’s activists were engaged in high-stakes and high-profile campaigns, attempting to halt logging and other practices they considered a threat to the natural heritage of North America and beyond. Over time, the movement also spawned many additional organizations with their own foci, such as the [Rainforest Action Network](#) and a group that would eventually become the [Center for Biological Diversity](#) , one of the most tenacious defenders of wildlands in North America.

Between 1983 and 1987, the movement experienced a dramatic expansion in numbers and campaigns, and its public profile increased. Activists started invading the offices of politicians and companies, blockading bulldozers or occupying ancient trees, and in some cases, driving metal stakes into trees or sabotaging equipment in their

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efforts to thwart logging. These tactics also created controversy and garnered major media attention, which activists hoped would spur increased public resistance to deforestation. Internal dissension also grew during these years, however, as anarchists (of different sorts) debated with non-anarchists, and some of the movement's feminists, most prominently Judi Bari, objected to what they considered to be the sexism of the movement's most prominent male leaders. Still others complained about the hierarchal structure of the journal itself and demanded a wider array of voices be included, including those advancing animal-liberationist and social-justice causes.



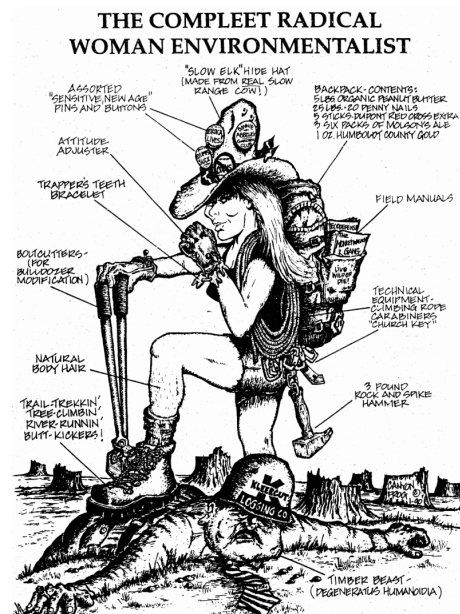
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These are cartoon depictions of “ideal” male and female radical environmentalists. The female portrayal, in particular, received criticism from women in Earth First!, who thought it demonstrated an underlying sexism prevalent in the movement. It was debated for decades to come, particularly in the writings of Judi Bari. See [Earth First! Journal 11, no. 5](#).

In 1987, Edward Abbey himself, who had become friends with Foreman and attended movement gatherings, was harshly criticized for supposedly sexist and racist views but was sharply defended by others, which led to deeper divisions in the movement. Leftists and anarchists promoted greater attention to economic injustices and revolutionary movements while others objected, arguing that Earth First! should stay tightly focused on the conservation of biological diversity and not get distracted by such causes, however justifiable they might be on anthropocentric or humanitarian grounds.

By the mid-1980s, Foreman had become disillusioned with the movement he had co-founded, and after the attacks on Abbey in late 1987 he decided to step back from editing the journal. The growing contention and Foreman's decision were signs that momentum was building toward a major schism in the movement.



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The original exhibition includes an interactive gallery of articles concerning the Earth First! movement. View the items on the following pages.

*For six years I've been editor of The Earth First! Journal. I've watched it grow as I've watched the Earth First! movement grow. During the past three years, I've been aided in producing this newspaper on an ever-increasing basis by John Davis. Indeed, John (as Managing Editor) has had primary editorial responsibility for much of that time. It is time for change, and for recognition of John's key role.*

*With this issue, John Davis becomes Editor of The Earth First! Journal. I will continue as Publisher, and will provide what help is necessary to John and Dale in their editorial duties, although that help will steadily recede, as they take charge of all the multifarious duties required in putting out a newspaper. This*

*will free me to work on other projects, such as several books that Ned Ludd Books will publish during the next year or two. I also will contribute regular essays to EF! and will have primary responsibility for "Dear Ned Ludd" and for the "Earth First! Bookstore" – which will become a bit more personalized.*

*Since I took over the editor's job in 1982, I've written an editorial column, "Around the Campfire," on this page. That is now John's duty and his initial offering follows these comments. "Around the Campfire" will continue in a different form, however, as a fairly regular column in the back pages of this newspaper. In it, I'll comment on various topics of interest within the Earth First! tribe.*

*Before I turn this over to John, let me simply say that editing and publishing The Earth First! Journal has been the high point of my seventeen-year career as a preservationist. I've enjoyed it, and I've felt fulfilled in doing it. But it is time to move on. I'm tired of the constant responsibility of producing a newspaper eight times a year, I've spent enough time as the most visible spokesperson for the Earth First! movement, and I yearn for the freedom to represent only Dave Foreman. Thanks to all of you for your support of this newspaper and this movement over the last years.*

*'Nough said. I can't think of anyone I would rather have replace me as editor than my friend, John Davis. That's why he's your new editor.*  
—Dave Foreman

See [Earth First! 8, no. 6](#) © *Earth First!*

## Dave Foreman Steps Back as Editor for Earth First! Journal (21 June 1988)

Before I turn this over to John, let me simply say that editing and publishing *The Earth First! Journal* has been the high point of my seventeen-year career as a preservationist. I've enjoyed it, and I've felt fulfilled in doing it. But it is time to move on.

— Dave Foreman

See [Earth First! 8, no. 6](#)

Foreman & Morton:

# "Good luck, darlin'. It's been great."

Dear friends

We feel like we should be sitting at the bar of a seedy honky-tonk, drinking Lone Star, thumbing quarters in the country-western jukebox, and writing this letter on a bar napkin.

Breaking up is never easy to do, whether it's with a lover or an organization that's been the central focus of your life for a decade. But people and groups change over time, and the Earth First! movement seems to be changing in such a way that we don't feel comfortable sharing a name with it any longer.

So it's time to sit down and write a "Dear John" letter to Earth First!. This isn't a sad letter, but it's not a happy letter either. It's a letter that remembers the good times, but recognizes we and Earth First! are on separate trails. It's bittersweet, with fond memories and glad anticipations.

From the beginning, Earth First! has straddled a wide slice of the environmental movement. It seems to us that we've had three major strains: monkeywrenching, biocentrism and ecological wilderness preservation/restoration, and confrontational direct action both legal (demonstrations) and illegal (civil disobedience). Different personalities have been attracted to Earth First! by each of these strains and the dynamic among them has contributed to the vigorously positive impact Earth First! has had on the environmental movement.

A good metaphor, we think, for Earth First! over the last decade is that of a generalist species in a new habitat with many available niches. (Say, a finch blown over to the Galapagos.) Slowly, different populations of that generalist species adapt to more effectively exploit the different niches and evolve into separate species. Oftentimes, external environmental stresses push a generalist species toward faster differentiation into separate, specifically adapted sister species.

This is what has happened to us in Earth First!. Those given to better exploiting the different niches of monkeywrenching, direct action, and conservation biology have been diverging.

For several years we've recognized signs

of these changes and Dave has tried to point them out in articles and speeches. Sensing an influx into our gene pool by those more adapted to a social and economic justice worldview than an ecological one, Dave offered his perspective on what defined the Earth First! species in a speech at the 1987 Grand Canyon Rendezvous and later in an article for the *Earth First! Journal* entitled "Whither Earth First!?"

However, the divergence continued and has been hastened by increased predation from the FBI and others. Unless we can adapt to both this changed environment and this divergence within our gene pool we will become extinct as a species.

Our personal choice for adapting is to declare that the Earth First! movement has been a success, that it has accomplished far more than any of us dreamed possible ten years ago, and then retire the name "Earth First!". We should then regroup under different names to continue the work to which we are individually best adapted and with those we are most closely related. In ecological terms, then, to declare our generalist species extinct because of evolution into separate sister species that are specifically adapted to different niches. Of course, this is unlikely to happen because many remain attached to the Earth First! name for various reasons and others are loath to give up the tribal sense of belonging inherent to the Earth First! movement.

So be it.

Both of us have smoked a lot of cigars and downed a lot of beers trying to figure out what to do. But we cannot escape the fact that we are uneasy with much in the current EF! movement. We therefore have come to the irrevocable decision to leave. This letter announces that decision. We do not henceforth represent what has become Earth First! and we are not represented by it.

We do not wish to go into some unfortunate matters of recent rhetoric directed against us (Dave in particular) and the original ideals of Earth First! by some who would lead the movement to a new niche, nor belabor the specific trends and tendencies within EF! that cause us concern. And we wish to make it abundantly clear that for the

most part these are honest differences between decent people who respect one another.

As a joke, we see happening to the Earth First! movement what happened to the Greens in West Germany — an effort to transform an ecological group into a Leftist group. We also see a transformation to a more overtly counterculture/anti-establishment style, and the abandonment of biocentrism in favor of humanism.

Mind you, we are not opposed to campaigns for social and economic justice. We are generally supportive of such causes. But Earth First! has from the beginning been a wilderness preservation group, not a class-struggle group. For us, we still believe in Earth first. We are uncompromising advocates for the process of evolution and the non-human world. We stand by the guidelines Dave offered in 1987 in "Whither Earth First!". Moreover, we are conservationists. We are not anarchists or Leftists. We are biocentrists, not humanists.

Yes, we do believe that overpopulation is a fundamental problem. William Catton in *Ovassio* restates Malthus's dictum in ecological terms as *The biotic potential of any species exceeds the carrying capacity of its habitat*. That is exactly the case with human beings on this planet today. We believe that human overpopulation has led to overshooting the carrying capacity of the Earth and will result in a major ecological crash. We do not think that believing this means one is racist, fascist, imperialist, sexist or misogynistic even if it is politically incorrect for cornucopians of the Left, Right and Middle.

So, what does our leaving Earth First! mean? First of all, we will not exit in a rancorous or angry way. We wish those who remain in Earth First! the best and we wish campaigns like Redwood Summer every success. We will not attack the evolving Earth First! organization or individuals in it. We will not encourage anyone to leave Earth First! with us. We will not tell anyone they have to make a choice between EF! and us. We will not claim we are right and the class-struggle Left/counterculture approach of the "new" Earth First! is wrong. We are merely different and have our own separate strengths and roles to play. We continue to admire and respect many of the people and local groups in Earth First! and have no reason to criticize them.

We will continue with the fight. Dave plans to begin work on thoroughly revising and updating *Ecosocism* into a Third Edition. And, along with others who emphasize biocentrism, we will be starting a new organization to work on concrete proposals for

ecological wilderness identification, preservation and restoration.

Some will ask, "Why not stay and fight to return Earth First! to its original ideas and goals? Why abandon the movement to those who would transform Earth First! into an environmental reincarnation of the New Left?" We can only reply that we have never seen a fight for control of an organization achieve anything positive. We all have better things to do than engage in a sectarian donnybrook that will take us away from the real battle and result only in hard feelings. Also, as we've pointed out, we think that the Earth First! name and movement have outlived their usefulness for us. One reason for that is that we no longer manipulate the media. The media manipulate us and establish our style for us. It is time to regroup, refocus our energies, confuse our enemies, and do whatever we can do best to impede the destruction of our precious Earth. Moreover, a number of conservationists to whom we are very attached and with whom we wish to work in the future have already left or are planning to leave Earth First!. Finally, we do not want to discourage the courageous actions of those remaining in Earth First!.

In closing, let us thank all of you for your friendship and fellowship whether you are in the Earth First! movement or outside of it. These last ten years have been the best of our lives although we expect the next ten to be even better. We do not ask anyone to follow us out of Earth First! nor do we plan to offer competition to Earth First!. There is considerable room in the no-compromise environmental movement, many niches to fill, and a need for many groups working separately and/or harmoniously in defense of the great dance of life. Too much diversity within one group can become counterproductive. When that occurs, energy and time is wasted debating contrasting styles, philosophies, worldviews, priorities and strategies. It is far better to recognize the differences, accept that one is not right and the other wrong, that we're simply different, kiss a last time, file a no-fault divorce, and say to the other, "Good luck, darlin'. It's been great."

Splitting the sheets is not pleasant but staying together with irreconcilable differences is worse.

Happy Trails

— Dave Foreman and Nancy Morton  
POB 5141, Tucson, AZ 85703

P.S.—We are sorry that word of our plans leaked out in the news media before we had a chance to send this letter to the *EF! Journal*.

Back

## Expand Earth First!

Dear EFers,

I feel like I should be sitting around base camp listening to Bob Marley, smoking a hooter, and writing this on the back of a

of humor to be considered leftists. Besides, we are not trying to overthrow capitalism for the benefit of the proletariat. In fact, the society we envision is not spoken to in any leftist theory I've ever heard of. Those theo-

See *Earth First!* 10, no. 8 © *Earth First!*

### Dave Foreman's and Nancy Morton's Goodbye Letter (22 September 1990)

Both of us have smoked a lot of cigars and downed a lot of beers trying to figure out what to do. But we cannot escape the fact that we are uneasy with much in the current EF! movement. We therefore have come to the irrevocable decision to leave.

— Dave Foreman and Nancy Morton

See *Earth First!* 10, no. 8

Taylor, Bron. "Radical Environmentalism's Print History: From *Earth First!* to *Wild Earth*." *Environment & Society Portal, Virtual Exhibitions* 2018, no. 1. Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society. doi.org/10.5282/rcc/7988.

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Bari

# Expand Earth First!

Dear EFers,

I feel like I should be sitting around base camp listening to Bob Marley, smoking a hooter, and writing this on the back of a rolling paper. But if Dave Foreman wants a divorce from all the hippie leftist anarchist humanists in Earth First!, I've got a few things to say.

First of all, I'm not out to trash Dave Foreman. I have a lot of respect for him, both for introducing me and many others to the idea of biocentrism, and for the decentralized, non-hierarchical non-organization he helped set up in EF! But this divorce has been a long time coming, and it's based on real political differences.

Dave Foreman calls himself a conservationist, and believes that the focus of EF! should be limited to preserving wilderness in public land set-asides. I absolutely agree that we need to save everything we can, and I support all efforts to preserve or re-establish wilderness. But I don't think preserving wilderness in set-asides is enough. Our society is so destructive that any wilderness we preserve may be destroyed by acid rain, drought, or the greenhouse effect. And, as the earth continues to deteriorate under the weight of human abuse, social pressure to consume any unspoiled land will become so great that we will lose it eventually.

The only way to preserve wilderness and the only way to save our planet's life support system from collapse is to find a way to live on the earth that doesn't destroy the earth. In other words, Earth First! is not just a conservation movement, it is also a social change movement. This is why EF! has attracted so many people who live alternative lifestyles. It doesn't make sense to bemoan the destruction of nature while supporting the system that is destroying it. Yet Dave Foreman proudly calls himself a patriot, and glorifies the dominant culture of our corrupt society. He says he is a no-compromise defender of biodiversity, yet he has made the ultimate compromise of accepting a society that is literally based on the destruction of the earth.

But in spite of the fact that many of us think putting the earth first involves profound social change, it is wrong for Dave to characterize us as "leftists" or "a class struggle group." For one thing, we are too irreverent and we have too much of a sense

of humor to be considered leftists. Besides, we are not trying to overthrow capitalism for the benefit of the proletariat. In fact, the society we envision is not spoken to in any leftist theory I've ever heard of. Those theories deal only with how to redistribute the spoils of exploiting the earth to benefit a different class of humans. We need to build a society that is not based on the exploitation of the earth at all—a society whose goal is to achieve a stable state with nature for the benefit of all species.

Of course we are nowhere near such a society. But having this kind of world view does not mean we are working on social rather than ecological issues, or that we are humanists instead of deep ecologists. It just helps shape the strategies used in our EF! organizing. Dave Foreman would like to keep the movement small and pure. But profound social changes don't happen without mass movements, and we need a whole lot more of us to bring about even the modest reforms needed to save the redwoods. So the strategy for Redwood Summer was to increase our numbers. We had 2000 people at the EF! rally in Ft. Bragg, and we have been staging constant actions all summer. We're not watering down the movement—we're spreading our radicalism by sending all those people home with new experience in direct action.

Another change that goes with our world view is the prominence of women in EF! Ed Abbey's retrogressive view of women as sex objects doesn't make it here, where about 3/4 of the EF! organizers are strong and competent women. And although male dominance is not the only problem with our society or the sole reason for the destruction of nature, it is definitely a factor. Any change toward a non-exploitive culture would have to include a balance between masculine and feminine, and we had better start with our own movement.

It is particularly ironic that Dave sees us as having strayed from EF!'s principles, because we are the front line warriors of Earth First!, risking our lives out there defending the forest. And that is the most important part of our movement. We are a direct action group, and our policy is set on the front lines, not on the lecture circuit or in the minds of theoreticians.

Nobody has all the answers, and one of

continued on page 6

# Expand EF! . . .

continued from page 5

the strengths of Earth First! has always been our diversity. Rednecks for Wilderness and Hippy Wu-Wu's can co-exist in Earth First!, as long as we are all fighting to save this planet. Our decentralized non-structure leaves room for many strategies to be followed at once. But if Dave Foreman or anyone else starts insisting on conventional-ity, we will lose our spark.

I don't see Dave's leaving as a split in Earth First!, but rather as an evolution. We are not moving away from his ideas, we are expanding them. The activities he proposes are not in competition with ours, and there is no reason for anyone to have to choose sides. Things are not the same as they were ten years ago and Earth First! is changing too. But we will continue, and a year from now we'll still be out there kicking corporate butt.

— Judi Bari

Page 6 Earth First! September 22, 1990

See *Earth First!* 10, no. 8 © *Earth First!*

## Judi Bari's Response (22 September 1990)

First of all, I'm not out to trash Dave Foreman. I have a lot of respect for him, both for introducing me and many others to the idea of biocentrism, and for the decentralized, non-hierarchical non-organization he helped set up in EF! But this divorce has been a long time coming, and it's based on real political differences.

— Judi Bari

See *Earth First!* 10, no. 8

Taylor, Bron. "Radical Environmentalism's Print History: From *Earth First!* to *Wild Earth*." *Environment & Society Portal, Virtual Exhibitions* 2018, no. 1. Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society. doi.org/10.5282/rcc/7988.

Chapter: The *Earth First!* Journal as a Gateway to Movement History

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*Peg Millett with a raccoon mask on her head. In a recent phone conversation, Peg hoped her friends would "carry on, in the tradition of Abbey. Don't stop just because we're in jail."*

Four Earth First! members, including Dave Foreman, were arrested in May 1989 after an FBI informant infiltrated the group. The consequent arrest of a fifth activist led to the group being dubbed the "Arizona 5." See *Earth First!* 9, no. 6 .

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Between 1987 and 1990, Earth First! campaigns proliferated and intensified, law enforcement authorities infiltrated the movement and a bombing captured headlines, exacerbating internal divisions yet further. On 29 and 30 May 1989, four activists, including Foreman, were arrested by federal agents (a fifth activist was arrested later, and the group was dubbed the Arizona 5); they were accused of conspiring to topple power lines associated with a nuclear power plant, along with other crimes. All of the activists were eventually convicted; one received a six-year sentence, the second three years. Foreman himself eventually pled guilty to a misdemeanor and avoided jail altogether.

Long before the cases of the Arizona 5 were adjudicated, on 24 May 1990, a bomb exploded in a car being driven

Taylor, Bron. "Radical Environmentalism's Print History: From *Earth First!* to *Wild Earth*." Environment & Society Portal, *Virtual Exhibitions* 2018, no. 1. Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society. [doi.org/10.5282/rcc/7988](https://doi.org/10.5282/rcc/7988).

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by Judi Bari in Oakland, California, nearly killing her and injuring her passenger, fellow activist Darryl Cherney. They were the most prominent leaders of an Earth First! campaign to prevent the logging of ancient redwoods in northern California. At that time they were organizing a dramatic civil disobedience campaign that, combined with tree sits and blockades, had already disrupted logging and promised to do so all the more. Although Bari had been assaulted previously and she and Cherney regularly received death threats, the authorities charged them with knowingly carrying a bomb and publicly called them ecoterrorists. The pair was eventually vindicated but Bari died from breast cancer in 1997. Five years later, in 2002, Cherney and representatives of Bari's estate won 4.4 million US dollars in a lawsuit against officials from the FBI and Oakland Police Department, whom a jury ruled had violated Bari and Cherney's free speech and other civil rights.



The remains of the car in which Judi Bari and Darryl Cherney were traveling after a pipe bomb tore it to pieces on 24 May 1990, leaving Bari disabled for life. See [Earth First! Journal 14, no. 5](#).

© Oakland Police Department

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- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/mml/earth-first-2-no-8>
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- <http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/>
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- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/mml/earth-first-9-no-6>
- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/mml/earth-first-journal-14-no-5>

Taylor, Bron. "Radical Environmentalism's Print History: From *Earth First!* to *Wild Earth*." Environment & Society Portal, *Virtual Exhibitions* 2018, no. 1. Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society. [doi.org/10.5282/rcc/7988](https://doi.org/10.5282/rcc/7988).

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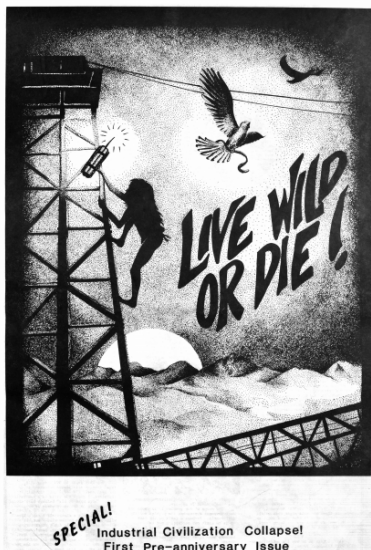
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## The Second Decade (1990-2000)

By the late 1980s, some of those with differing, and more overtly anarchistic perspectives than Foreman, who controlled the journal through the 1980s, began publishing their own tabloids. Among these were *Live Wild or Die!*, which was orchestrated foremost by M. J., one of the movements' best known Northwestern forest defenders, and *ALARM*, which was orchestrated by two other longstanding and important Earth First! activists, Anne Peterman and Orin Langelle, and published in the Northeastern U.S. Many issues from these magazines appear in this print history.

The original exhibition includes an interactive gallery of the journals *Live Wild or Die!*, *ALARM*, and *Wild Earth*. View the items on the following pages.



© *Live Wild or Die*

### *Live Wild or Die!* no. 1, Front Page

This is not an “Environmentalist” newspaper. Environmentalism is the political ideology which places bureaucratic band-aids on the industrial cancer. Environmentalism is single-issue Liberal politics divorced from the ensemble of life. This is not even a “radical environmentalist” paper! We need to re-invent the world, not re-label it.  
— Editorial introduction to *Live Wild or Die*, no. 1

Taylor, Bron. “Radical Environmentalism’s Print History: From *Earth First!* to *Wild Earth*.” *Environment & Society Portal, Virtual Exhibitions* 2018, no. 1. Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society. [doi.org/10.5282/rcc/7988](https://doi.org/10.5282/rcc/7988).

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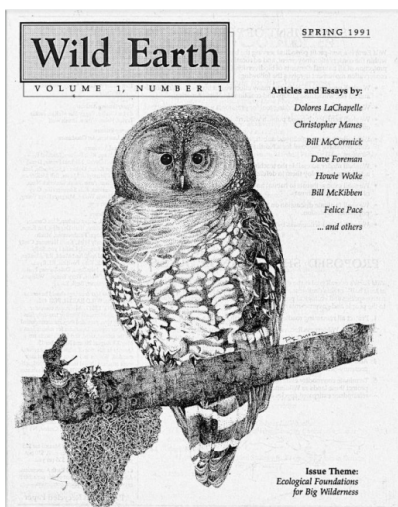
© Alarm

## ALARM no. 3, Front Page

We are publishing this journal for various reasons. One is to document activities in our region while presenting an Earth First! vision for the northeast that hopefully can be used as an educational tool to empower people to take direct action. Another important reason is that we feel we have to.

— Orin Langelle

See [ALARM no. 3](#)



© Wild Earth, Front Page

## Wild Earth 1, no. 1, Front Page

If you like the talk and the company around this campfire, join us. Sit down and share your ideas. But if this campfire doesn't feel like home to you, please look for another one. There are lots of good groups out there. *Wild Earth* is not for everyone. We are conservationists. We believe in wilderness for its own sake. With John Muir, we are on the side of the bears in the war industrial humans have declared against wild nature.

— Dave Foreman

See [Wild Earth 1, no. 1](#)

Taylor, Bron. "Radical Environmentalism's Print History: From *Earth First!* to *Wild Earth*." *Environment & Society Portal, Virtual Exhibitions* 2018, no. 1. Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society. [doi.org/10.5282/rcc/7988](https://doi.org/10.5282/rcc/7988).

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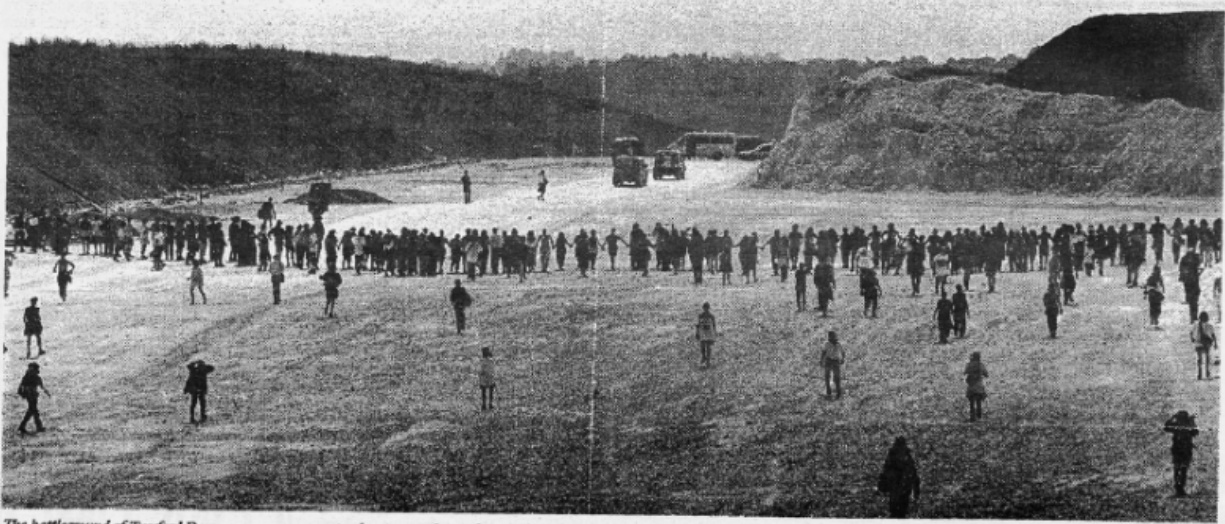
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The movement, made fragile from internal divisions and external repression, did not survive intact for long after the arrests of Foreman and the bombing of Bari and Cherney. After the bombing, some activists withdrew out of fear that they might be targeted by vigilantes or framed by law enforcement authorities. Foreman and those closest to him felt unsupported by the wider movement in their precarious situation as they faced trial, and moreover, thought that the movement had lost its moorings with its increasingly diverse array of concerns and passions. He and his closest associates withdrew from the movement before or by the end of its first decade, leaving the movement in crisis at the beginning of the 1990s. (Foreman went on to establish and publish *Wild Earth* (1991–2004) which took a strong biocentric perspective deeply informed by conservation biology.)

After a brief period in the early 1990s wherein Earth First! co-founder Mike Roselle was installed as lead editor of the movement's journal but was viewed as too authoritarian in his editorial style by some activists, a new, collective structure was established to publish *Earth First!* The journal's new structure reflected the growing proportion of anarchists in the post-schism movement. The issues addressed in the journal grew dramatically to include a host of causes that had gotten relatively little attention during the 1980s, including animal liberation and the support of [Animal Liberation Front](#) (ALF) prisoners. It also focused increasing attention on egalitarian ideals, advancing many anti-capitalist, anti-racist and anti-sexist causes, and engaging in much internal critique of the movement's failures to consistently reflect and promote these values.

# E.L.F.

## Earth Liberation Front Ignites Britain



The battleground of Twyford Down saw numerous acts of ecotage and served to catalyze the British monkeywrenching movement.

This *Earth First! Journal* issue included an introduction to the Earth Liberation Front, an offshoot of Earth First! that emerged in 1992. See [Earth First! Journal 13, no. 8](#). Click on the image for a larger format.

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Perhaps most significantly, the journal's pages increasingly discussed (most would say at least implicitly endorsing) increasingly radical tactics, including arson. Its pages also sympathetically covered the groups becoming infamous for such tactics, including the Animal Liberation Front and the Earth Liberation Front (ELF, an offshoot from Earth First! in the United Kingdom in 1992 by activists frustrated by the movement's absolute commitment to non-violence).

Noting this radicalization, the so-called Unabomber, Theodore John Kaczynski, wrote to a journal editor expressing appreciation for an article she wrote endorsing arson. (Kaczynski had waged a murderous mail-bomb campaign against those he considered representatives of an authoritarian and environmentally destructive technological civilization before he was arrested and convicted on multiple bomb-related charges and for three murders, and subsequently sentenced to life in prison in 1998.) Kaczynski had his sympathizers in the radical environmental movement, but great controversy arose about whether the journal should publish his letter or a prison interview that this editor eventually conducted with him.

Taylor, Bron. "Radical Environmentalism's Print History: From *Earth First!* to *Wild Earth*." *Environment & Society Portal, Virtual Exhibitions* 2018, no. 1. Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society. [doi.org/10.5282/rcc/7988](https://doi.org/10.5282/rcc/7988).

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Many movement activists rejected his violent tactics and did not want the movement tarred by them. But the explicit and implicit endorsement of the ALF and ELF, the sympathy of some for Kaczynski, and the focus on issues that some in the movement considered to be mired in distracting, anthropocentric concerns, caused more moderate members of the movement to drift away. The result was an increasingly radical and anarchistic movement.

# To Wrench or Not to Wrench

## SYNERGISTIC MONKEYWRENCHING & CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

## MONKEYWRENCHING

by Judi Bari

**By WOLFRUM**

The following opinions are derived from a decade of experience with both civil disobedience and monkeywrenching (and a lot else) in the Earth First! movement, as well as additional experience with the anti-nuclear movement.

I come from the curious ideological background of having been both a dedicated monkeywrencher and an ardent monkeywrencher. This is not to say I advocate doing both at the same time and place—I would not be a responsible civil disobedience organizer if I did. However, as we rapidly approach an abyss of ecological biodiversity loss, simultaneous occurrence of both is becoming not just predictable but inevitable. It is hardly worth debating—the wrenching could not be stopped anyway. (I'm also an anarchist and proud of it.) Who am I—or anyone else in the movement—to tell someone else what to do? We may have the power of persuasion at times, but certainly not the power of education—I don't want it and we shouldn't. For the means match the end.

Destruction of machines is not a violent act, as long as care is taken not to kill or seriously harm any life. I don't know of a single instance of ELF monkeywrenching killing or seriously injuring anyone—(except the wrenchers)—and I think we would have heard. It has been shown that the Cloverdale incident was not an ELF spiking, despite the predictable media hoopla to the contrary.

Things have only gotten worse—except that there is a growing awareness of the problems and the increasing, reactive attempts at greenwashing by the government. We have slowed down the logging of ancient forests, but as the spotted owl plaintiffs' capitulation shows, imminent "victories" can all too easily slip through our fingers due to inbred naive faith in the system. So of all the times to pull out the stops and let our full efforts roar, this is it, folks. There are very few of us and we need to have the strength and effect of more. You don't need to publicly condone monkeywrenching or let your wrenching (or your "smug" activities) interfere with the other work you need to do. We just need to do whatever is most effective in the situations we face. As Lao Tzu said, "In action, watch the timing."

In quite a few cases, from the Godavari Action Group campaign in Washington to the ancient forest campaign as a whole, the use of the full range of tactics seems to have brought positive results. Why is there so much media/government reaction against monkeywrenching (including spiking)? Because they're scared of it; it weakens them. All they care about is money—it's what fuels their destruction. So monkeywrenching has a valid role to play: it ups the ante; it puts greater pressure on them to consider if the project being wrenched is economically or politically viable. In some cases, it works—usually in combination with many other tactics in a concerted, long-range campaign which did not organize the monkeywrenching.

Even where wrenching is not associated with a larger campaign, it drains the system's energies, makes it easier for other activists to get a foothold in their attack. Who cares about our reputation as CD activists? The earth is at stake and the feds will attempt to do whatever they want to us anyway. If your group runs into problems because of association with monkeywrenching, change your group's name, but not its commitment. That has worked for many.

As for civil disobedience campaigns, the Franklin River blockades are a good example of what must happen in this country—but we need to get many more people involved at that level of risk. It will take more and better organizing and education than we have done. At this point we may not be able to attract enough people to remote areas to pull off that kind of sustained, large-scale CD, but we can try. We need to try everything that looks strategically effective, working together or separately—with mutual respect.

Retreating into the hills after their impressive takeover of four towns in southern Mexico, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation dropped two power lines and called on their supporters to engage in other acts of sabotage.

Unlike Earth First!, the Zapatista Army does not publish a "Zapatista Journal," complete with tips on how to take down power lines, and listing the names, addresses, and phone numbers of the activists in a "Zapatista Directory." They understand the difference between above ground and below ground activities, and they understand that the survival of the movement requires separating the two.

Earth First! has treated monkeywrenching like a boy scout panty raid. Our failure to recognize the seriousness of the tactic has helped to endanger public Earth Firsties, isolate and discredit our movement, and drive away some of our best activists. Yet there are still people in Earth First! who think that if you won't publicly advocate monkeywrenching you are not a "real" Earth Firster. That the choice is between monkeywrenching and becoming "a society of banner hangers."

I think these attitudes stem from a failure to analyze and understand our tactics. Earth First! stands for biocentrism, no compromise, and direct action. Direct action does not just mean demonstrations. It means action at the point of production, designed to stop or slow production. This is in contrast to indirect action, such as elections and lobbying. In a society where power and elections are just a facade to maintain corporate control, direct action at the point of production is one of the most effective places we can work.

That's one of the reasons Earth First! has had power and influence beyond our numbers.

Civil disobedience and sabotage are both examples of direct action at the point of production. Both temporarily stop production. Both are principled and courageous. Both have been effective. And neither can work in the long run without public support.

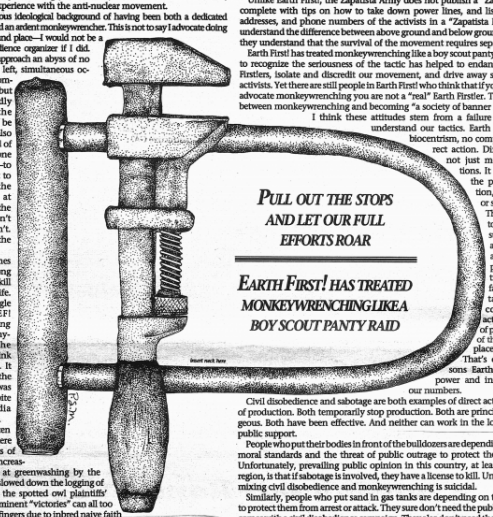
People who put their bodies in front of the bulldozers are depending on prevailing moral standards and the threat of public outrage to protect them from attack. Unfortunately, prevailing public opinion in this country, at least in the timber region, is that if sabotage is involved, they have a license to kill. Until that changes, mixing civil disobedience and monkeywrenching is suicidal.

Similarly, people who put sand in gas tanks are depending on their anonymity to protect them from arrest or attack. They sure don't need the public spotlight that comes with a civil disobedience campaign. They also don't need the access provided for FBI infiltrators when they associate with a public group like Earth First!

None of this is theoretical. We have 12 years of experience to back it up. How many more of us need to be bombed, jailed, or scared away before we figure this shit out?


England Earth First! has been taking some necessary steps to separate above ground and clandestine activities. Earth First!, the public group, has a non-violence code and does civil disobedience blockades. Monkeywrenching is done by Earth Liberation Front (ELF). Although Earth First! may sympathize with the activities of ELF, they do not engage in them.

If we are serious about our movement in the US, we will do the same. Earth First! is already an above ground group. We have above-ground publications, public events, and a yearly Rendezvous with open attendance. Civil disobedience and sabotage are both powerful tactics in our movement. For the survival of both, it's time to leave the night work to the elves in the woods.



**PULL OUT THE STOPS  
AND LET OUR FULL  
EFFORTS ROAR**

**EARTH FIRST! HAS TREATED  
MONKEYWRENCHING LIKE A  
BOY SCOUT PANTY RAID**



Page 8 Earth First! Spring 1994

Following the bombing of her car, Judi Bari wrote an article asserting that Earth First! should be responsible for non-violent actions while violent actions should be left to underground groups like the Earth Liberation Front (ELF). See [Earth First! Journal 14, no. 3](#).

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Throughout the 1990s Earth First!'s campaigns primarily involved protests, lawsuits, and civil disobedience. In several cases, the resistance gained enough strength to orchestrate large protests that included mass protest arrests,

Taylor, Bron. "Radical Environmentalism's Print History: From *Earth First!* to *Wild Earth*." Environment & Society Portal, *Virtual Exhibitions* 2018, no. 1. Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society. [doi.org/10.5282/rcc/7988](https://doi.org/10.5282/rcc/7988).

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as in 1996 when thousands of citizens gathered in a sparsely populated area of northern California to protest logging in ancient redwood groves by the Pacific Lumber Company (PALCO); over a thousand citizens were arrested. This and a decade of resistance to PALCO's practices contributed to political pressures to reduce social disruption and the loss of political support, and led to heightened scrutiny by state forest authorities and to the company being cited repeatedly for violating the law. Eventually, a deal was worked out wherein the company would sell the most biologically precious old-growth groves to the state of California. Not long afterward the company went bankrupt and was sold to another company with a better reputation, which promised to protect the remaining ancient groves and manage the rest of its forestland more gently.

In another long struggle, Earth First! and other environmental activists worked in solidarity with religiously traditional American Indians opposed to a complex of telescopes being built (with more planned) on Mount Graham in southeastern Arizona. In their own ways both the Indian and environmental activists viewed the mountain as sacred, either as a place of ceremony and prayer necessary to communicate with their gods, on the one hand, or as a sacred island ecosystem populated by precious, endangered species. Although they did not prevent the construction of three telescopes, they did thwart the construction of eight others.

The original exhibition includes an interactive timeline of stories from Mount Graham and from the resistance to PALCO's practices in Headwaters Forest. View the images on the following pages.



In southeastern Arizona, a tree-sitter sits high in a tree, from his perch at the top of Arizona's Mt. Graham. Observatory developers cut several acres of trees in the area, but his week-long occupation prevented cutting of one old-growth grove.

© *Earth First!*

## Anonymous Tree-Sitter

On Friday 28 September 1990, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals drew back its previous decision to halt the preparatory work for the University of Arizona's construction of three telescopes on Mt. Graham in southern Arizona. This decision allowed the University to cut down trees and clear the telescope sites with an immediate effect.

As the trucks began to roll, the ecowarriors, even those in handcuffs, threw their bodies in front of them. [...] The fight for Mt. Graham continues.

— Jim Leonard

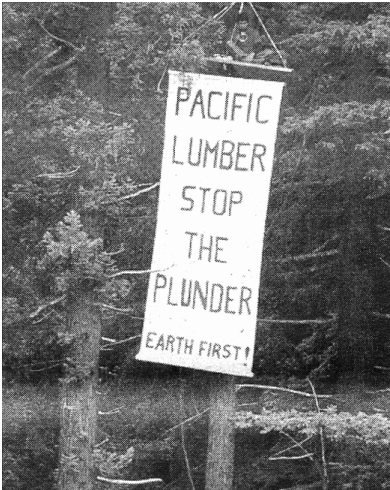
See [Earth First! Journal 11, no. 1](#)

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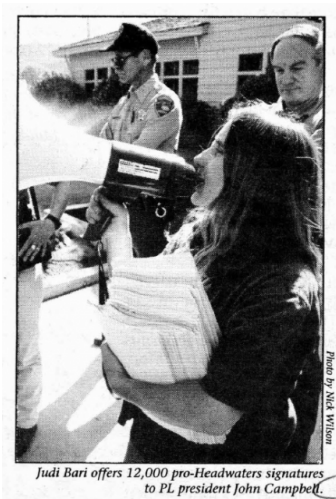
## Pacific Lumber Banner

After eight years of direct action, public demonstrations, court battles, ballot initiatives, and legislative efforts were culminating in a promising bill to protect vast areas of the redwood ecosystem. The Headwaters Forest in northern California were at the core of this wilderness bill. The banner is calling on Pacific Lumber to relinquish its territory of redwoods, which was planned for logging.

Earth First! staged protests to awaken the public to the plight of the redwoods. [...] May the ancient trees of Headwaters forever stand tall!

— Unknown

See [Earth First! Journal 14, no. 3](#)



Judi Bari offers 12,000 pro-Headwaters signatures to PL president John Campbell.

© *Earth First! Journal*

## Judi Bari

Judi Bari handed over 12,000 signatures urging the Pacific Lumber's president to save Headwaters Forest.

Well, we did it! In the face of a swift and impressive mobilization of community outrage, Maxxam/Pacific Lumber (PL) backed down and signed an agreement on March 28 to delay their logging deadline for Headwaters Forest.

— Judi Bari

See [Earth First! Journal 15, no. 5](#)

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Photo by Karen Pickett

**Fearless arrestees at the California Department of Forestry action**

© *Earth First! Journal*

## Arrested Earth First! Members

Earth First! members were arrested after occupying the California Department of Forestry in protest against the logging plans for the Headwaters Forest.

Support people helped a blockader lock himself to the steering column in the Chevy while two others locked to other parts of the body. Click, click, click. Two more people secured themselves to the gate. Another gate was buried in three feet of rubble.

— Karen Pickett

See *Earth First! Journal* 15, no. 7

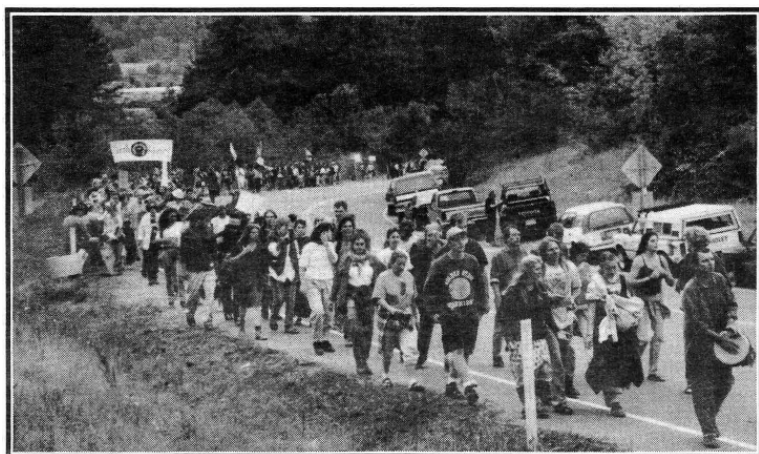


Photo by Randy Ghent

**2000 people turn out in support of Headwaters**

© *Earth First! Journal*

## Mass Action for Headwaters

This photo was taken during a mass action for Headwaters on 15 September 1995. Of the 2000 participants, 264 were arrested.

The September 15 rally included people from many walks of life: urban Food not Bombers, grandmothers, timber workers, toddlers, local housewives and dreadlocked hippies.

— Randy Ghent

See *Earth First! Journal* 15, no. 8

Taylor, Bron. "Radical Environmentalism's Print History: From *Earth First!* to *Wild Earth*." *Environment & Society Portal, Virtual Exhibitions* 2018, no. 1. Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society. [doi.org/10.5282/rcc/7988](https://doi.org/10.5282/rcc/7988).

**Chapter:** The Second Decade (1990-2000)

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This car lockdown was one of six blockades on September 16, shutting down every entrance to the Headwaters complex.

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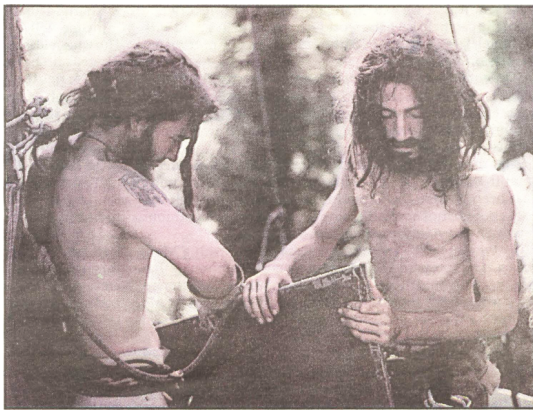
## Save the Headwaters Forest

This photo was taken during the protest against Pacific Lumber on 16 September 1996. An estimated 1,000 out of 8,000 protesters were arrested in what was a record-breaking protest at the time.

In a stunning display of cluelessness, PL [Pacific Lumber] began dragging ancient trees out of All Species Grove on the day before the Board meeting. Suddenly, any remaining public illusions about the deal evaporated, and Feinstein and Garamendi spent the day stammering into the cameras with rotten egg on their faces.

— Hugh Morose

See *Earth First! Journal* 17, no. 1



Gypsy (left) helps construct the Liberty tree sit, 1997

© *Northcoast EF!*

## EF! Activist Killed

David Nathan Chain, known to his friends as “Gypsy,” lost his life on 17 September 1998 when a tree cut by a Pacific Lumber logger crushed him to death.

The fact that the loggers were indeed aware of the protesters’ presence was corroborated by a videotape recorded less than an hour before Chain was killed. It contains threats and admonitions by the logger to “Get the fuck out of here or there’s going to be a tree coming your way!”

— Karen Pickett

See *Earth First! Journal* 19, no. 1

Taylor, Bron. “Radical Environmentalism’s Print History: From *Earth First!* to *Wild Earth*.” *Environment & Society Portal, Virtual Exhibitions* 2018, no. 1. Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society. [doi.org/10.5282/rcc/7988](https://doi.org/10.5282/rcc/7988).

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Often complemented by lawsuits, the radical environmental movement had no small number of victories in the 1990s, although the victories were usually small. Nevertheless, the perception of the movement's activists was that they were losing overall and badly, and moreover, that the government was not only corrupt and in cahoots with industry, but increasingly repressive. Such perceptions reinforced an increasingly common view in the movement that the time had come to eschew above-ground tactics and create an underground resistance movement. By the mid-1990s there was a proliferation of such tactics. Between then and the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001, at least twenty activists deployed arson as a tactic—torching gas-guzzling sport utility vehicles, a ski lodge being built in the habitat of a threatened species of Canadian Lynx in Colorado, a Forest Service office in Oregon, a university research station believed to be investigating the genetic modification of organisms in Washington, and “trophy homes” being built in ecologically sensitive areas—to name but a few of these incendiary incidents.



Flames engulf Two Elks Lodge.

On the night of 18 October 1998, members of the Earth Liberation Front set fire to the Two Elks Lodge in Vail, Colorado. This action resulted in minimum damages of more than \$12 million to Vail Associates, making it one of the most expensive acts of environmental sabotage to date. The fires were set five days after a decision to allow the Vail Associates' planned expansion into the Two Elk Roadless Area. See *Earth First! Journal* 19, no. 2 .

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Taylor, Bron. “Radical Environmentalism’s Print History: From *Earth First!* to *Wild Earth*.” *Environment & Society Portal, Virtual Exhibitions* 2018, no. 1. Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society. [doi.org/10.5282/rcc/7988](https://doi.org/10.5282/rcc/7988).

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- <http://www.animalliberationfront.com/>

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## The Third Decade and Beyond: Radical Environmentalism in the Twenty-First Century

While these sorts of tactics have drawn the bulk of the media's attention to these movements, significant environmental victories have been won, or contributed to, by radical environmentalists. In January 2001, for example, the United States Forest Service under President Bill Clinton issued the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, which protected over 25 million hectares (58 million acres) of federal forest lands. Although it took more than a decade of legal battles for opponents of this rule to exhaust their legal challenges to it, it eventually became [the law of the land](#) . It is inconceivable that the government would have issued this important rule in the absence of a decade of strong and disruptive resistance to the Forest Service's timber program by radical environmentalists. Although the rule did not provide everything radical environmental activists sought, it was a significant advance for biodiversity conservation in North America. (It was more than ten years before lawsuits challenging the rule were finally exhausted. For the decisive 21 October 2011 ruling in *Wyoming v. United States Department of Agriculture*, see [here](#) . This decision was confirmed on 1 October 2012 when the Supreme Court of the United States declined Wyoming's appeal; see "[US Supreme Court Supports Clinton's Roadless Rule.](#)" )

# The Roadless Policy:

## A reduction, not a ban

BY MARNIE CRILEY

If you haven't heard yet, President Clinton signed the Roadless Policy on January 5. This is an historic occasion, and the environmental community should be proud of its hard work in influencing the protections it offers to 58.5 million acres of inventoried roadless lands. The policy is an improvement over the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) we saw back in May of last year. But now that we've had some time to celebrate, we need to take a closer look and see just how much protection it will give to roadless areas.

Roadless Area Conservation Rule. See *Earth First! Journal* 21, no. 3 .

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Within a year of this ruling, however, the 11 September 2001 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center occurred, ushering in a very difficult period for the movement. While its campaigns continued, the federal government dramatically increased funding to apprehend activists involved in what it deemed "ecoterrorism," and it dramatically increased the prison terms for any acts so considered.

In December 2005, federal law enforcement officials then made the initial arrests of a half dozen Earth Liberation Front activists, and soon the number of convicted activists rose to nearly twenty, with several others becoming fugitives after, or in anticipation, of, being indicted. About two-thirds of the arrestees cooperated and named others whom they claimed were involved. Meanwhile, friends of the various activists debated, sometimes stridently, whether those who cooperated should be shunned or shown sympathy and supported. Much of the movement's energy and focus turned to giving support to the non-cooperating defendants and prisoners.

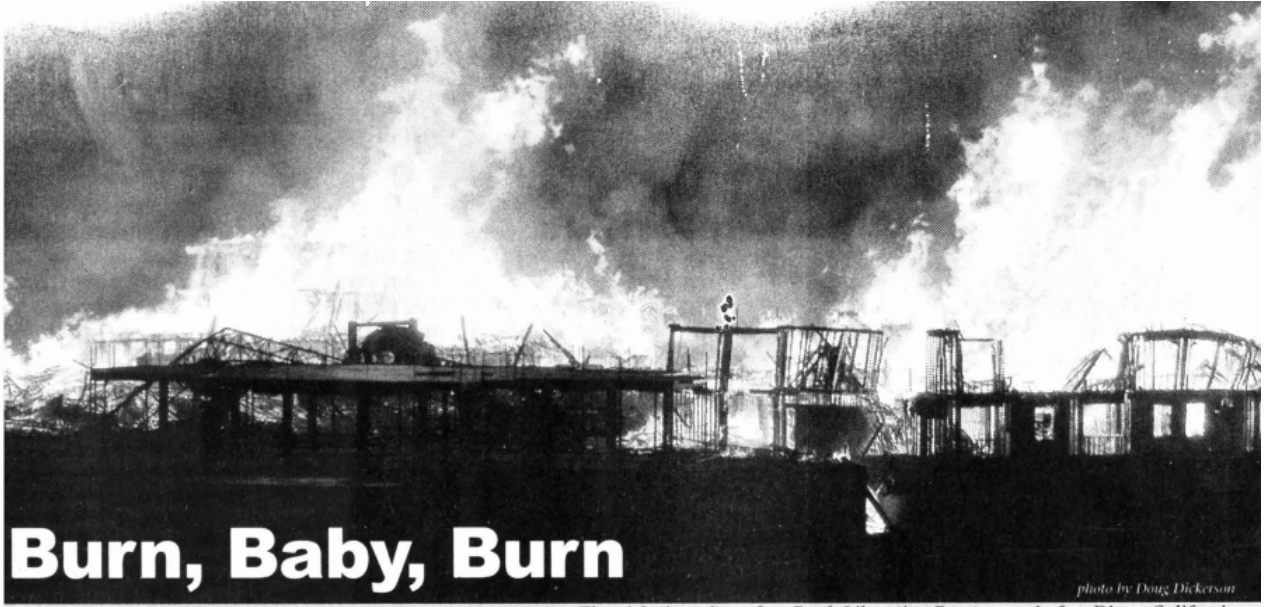
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## Burn, Baby, Burn

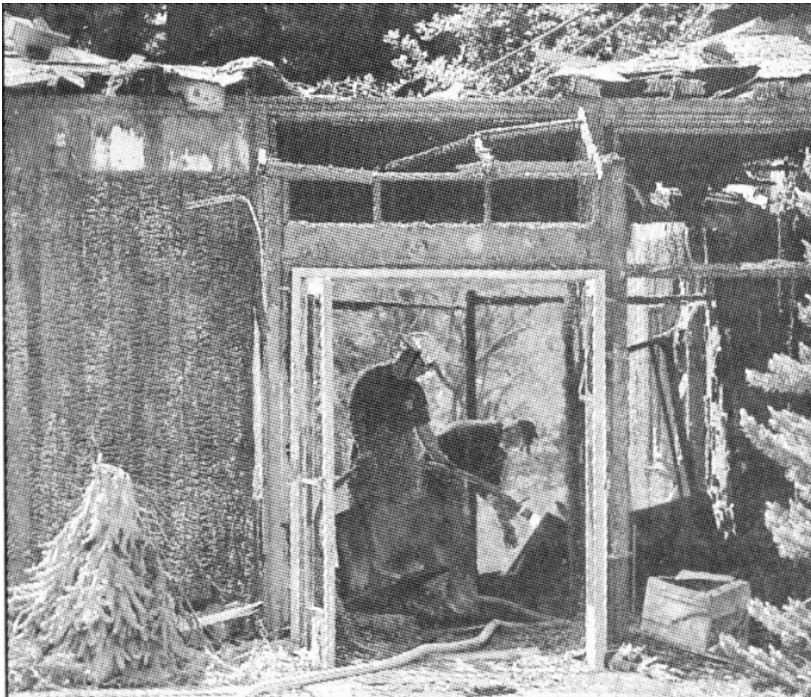
photo by Doug Dickerson

*The nighttime glow of an Earth Liberation Front arson in San Diego, California*

ELF accepted responsibility for one of the largest environmental sabotage in US history in San Diego, California. Activists started a fire that destroyed an unfinished five-story condominium complex on 1 August 2003. ELF credited themselves through a painted slogan on the building: “If you build it—we will burn it. E.L.F.” See *Earth First! Journal* 23, no. 6 .

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*The ALF and ELF burned this Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services facility in Olympia, Washington, on June 21, 1998.*

The Animal Liberation Front and Earth Liberation Front took joint responsibility for the burning of Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services buildings in Washington State. Damages were estimated to be almost \$2 million. See *Earth First! Journal* 26, no. 2 . Photograph by Peter Haley.

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# Six Arrested on “Ecoterrorism” Charges

BY JOSH

On Wednesday, December 7, federal agents arrested six people in a series of well-orchestrated raids that spanned four states. The six were charged with a number of Animal Liberation Front (ALF) and Earth Liberation Front (ELF) actions that took place in the Pacific Northwest between 1998 and 2001. All six were indicted separately and all denied any involvement with these or any other ALF or ELF actions.

William Rodgers and Kevin Tubbs were arrested in Prescott, Arizona, and Springfield, Oregon, respectively. They were charged with the arson of an Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services facility in Olympia, Washington, on June 21, 1998. A joint ALF/ELF cell claimed the action, which caused an estimated 1.2 million dollars in damage. If convicted, Rodgers and Tubbs each face sentences of up to 20 years.

awaiting deportation at a US Citizenship and Immigration Services detention facility in Tacoma, Washington. Thurston was also subpoenaed to appear before a Eugene, Oregon grand jury. Moreover, on December 7, federal agents served grand jury subpoenas to six others.

In the days following the arrests, authorities produced even more charges and accusations—an apparently random attempt to connect the defendants with virtually every major, unsolved ELF and ALF action that occurred in the Northwest between 1998 and 2001. Meyerhoff was indicted for the destruction of the Bonneville tower, while Tubbs was charged with 35 counts of arson for the March 2001 destruction of an SUV dealership in Eugene, Oregon—one count for each of the vehicles destroyed. Prosecutors at Gerlach’s arraignment presented her as a suspect in six additional arsons, including the ELF’s destruction of a ski resort in Vail, Colorado, in October 1998. Rodgers has also been named as a suspect in the

A 2006 article by “Josh” detailing the spate of federal arrests across four states for ALF and ELF actions between 1998 and 2001. See [Earth First! Journal 26, no. 2](#)

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While campaigns against deforestation continued, a great deal of discussion in the journal focused on how to build a non-hierarchical movement in which people with diverse identities—ethnic, gender, and sexual—could feel safe. Other movement activists felt that, although “Earth First!” remained the title of the journal, the moniker no longer defined the movement. The movement seemed to shrink further in the light of internal divisions and the state’s repressive power, and many of its activists considered it moribund.

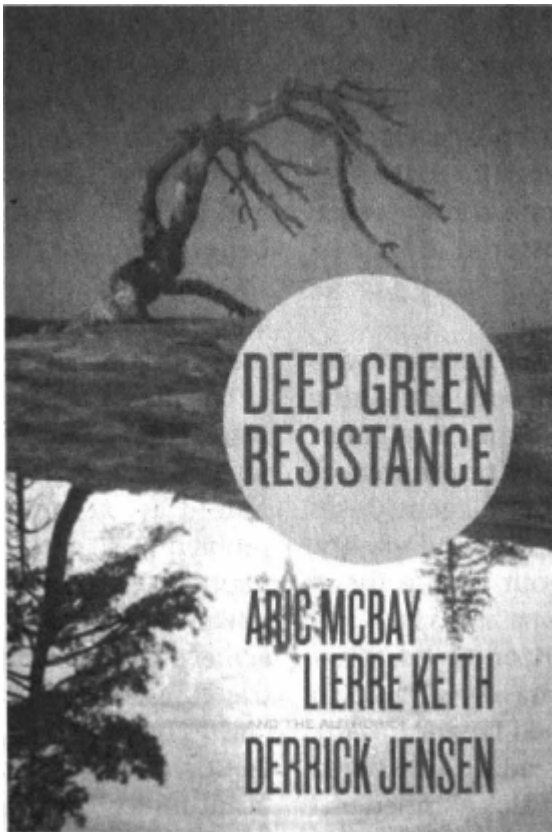
During the same period, however, a new generation of activists assumed responsibility for the journal and some of them sought to rekindle the biocentric vision that originally animated the movement, fusing it to the by-then prevailing egalitarian, anti-capitalist, and anarchistic ideology. Tensions within the movement as well as efforts toward reconciliation and regrouping can be seen in the journal’s pages during the early twenty-first century and beyond, along with concurrent attention to and support for ecological resistance movements around the world.

Taylor, Bron. “Radical Environmentalism’s Print History: From *Earth First!* to *Wild Earth*.” *Environment & Society Portal, Virtual Exhibitions* 2018, no. 1. Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society. [doi.org/10.5282/rcc/7988](https://doi.org/10.5282/rcc/7988).

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The [Deep Green Resistance](#) radical environmental group, modeled after the book of the same name, sought to dismantle industrial civilization. Earth First! members had both positive and negative responses to Deep Green Resistance, which viewed most environmental activism as unproductive.

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After the trials were over there also appeared to be signs of a rekindling of the most radical forms of militant environmental resistance. Just as a new moniker for a more radical form of resistance emerged in 1992 with the Earth Liberation Front, another new, radical environmental group took up the cause, labeling their movement [Deep Green Resistance](#), using arguments that were not really new: that the only solution to ecological devastation and social inequality is to end industrial civilization and by whatever means necessary. Like the most militant environmental activists a decade earlier, the group, led foremost by writer and activist Derrick Jensen, contended that electoral politics and lobbying, as well as educational and other reformist conversion strategies that prioritize increasing awareness and changing consciousness, have been ineffective, in part, because agricultural civilizations are established and maintained by intimidation and violence, and are inherently destructive and unsustainable. The only viable solution therefore, they claimed, is to bring down industrial civilization. This is feasible, they further contended, because of the current system's structural vulnerabilities, specifically, its dependence on fossil fuels. So, in a strategy that resembled the Earth Liberation Front a decade earlier, they urged activists to form secret cells to sabotage the energy infrastructure of today's dominant and destructive social and economic systems. They also contended that activists should eschew pacifist ideologies and

Taylor, Bron. "Radical Environmentalism's Print History: From *Earth First!* to *Wild Earth*." Environment & Society Portal, *Virtual Exhibitions* 2018, no. 1. Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society. [doi.org/10.5282/rcc/7988](https://doi.org/10.5282/rcc/7988).

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consider whether and when the time might be ripe to take up arms to overturn the system.

Since most of these strategies and points of view were articulated and practiced in the 1980s and 1990s, and the social and environmental conditions that gave rise to them have continued if not also intensified in most ways, in the coming years, we can expect periodic waves of radical environmental activism interspersed between relatively quiescent times, along with internal division, external suppression, and small and significant victories, all within an overall environmental landscape in which the global decline of biological and cultural diversity—, which gave rise to the movement in the first place—, continues to intensify.



This image, from a 1990 journal edition, communicates the persistent internal struggles regarding the priorities of Earth First! See [Earth First! Journal 10, no. 8](#).

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Indeed, if the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior, the pages of Earth First! (found [online](#) since 2010) may well presage the future: by recounting the trials and tribulations, experimentation with tactics, internal divisions, and successes and failures, of a movement purporting to challenge what it considers to be the anthropocentric economic/political systems of industrial (and industrializing) societies. Examining the images it presents and the arguments its activists make, perusing the poetry it provides and perhaps finding [environmental music](#) online which has helped to inspire its activists, will provide a sense of the movement in a way that reading scholarly or journalistic articles about it cannot.

Although not all of the movement campaigns or divisions are discussed in the journal's pages, its overall commitment to free speech and debate makes it an excellent primary source for understanding its internal disputes, its strengths, and weaknesses, its heroism and flaws. In the interest of free inquiry and debate, this valuable documentary archive is now available worldwide, for the first time, thanks to the Rachel Carson Center's Environment & Society Portal.

Taylor, Bron. "Radical Environmentalism's Print History: From *Earth First!* to *Wild Earth*." Environment & Society Portal, *Virtual Exhibitions* 2018, no. 1. Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society. [doi.org/10.5282/rcc/7988](https://doi.org/10.5282/rcc/7988).

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- <https://caselaw.findlaw.com/us-10th-circuit/1583397.html>
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- <https://www.deepgreenresistance.org/>
- <https://earthfirstjournal.org/>
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- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/mml/earth-first-26-no-2>
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## Further Reading

What follows is a selected bibliography on literature connected to the radical environmental movement history. The list is not comprehensive, but is intended as an introduction for readers interested in learning more about some of the literature from which the virtual exhibition “Radical Environmentalism’s Print History: From *Earth First!* to *Wild Earth*” draws.

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- <https://books.google.de/books?id=zsNG7TLNafEC&pg=PP1&hl=de&pg=PA183#v=onepage&q&f=false>
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## About the Virtual Exhibition and the Collection

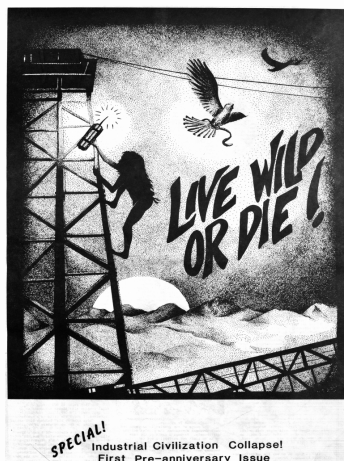
In this exhibition, American scholar and conservationist Bron Taylor outlines the history of Earth First!, the best known of the so-called “radical environmental” groups. His story offers an insightful and unique look at the radical environmental movement and its evolution. This exhibition has arisen out of Taylor’s article written for the Environment & Society Portal, “[Radical Environmentalism’s Print History: From \*Earth First!\* to \*Wild Earth\*.”](#)



*Earth First! Journal* (1980-)

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*Live Wild or Die!* (1988-1998)

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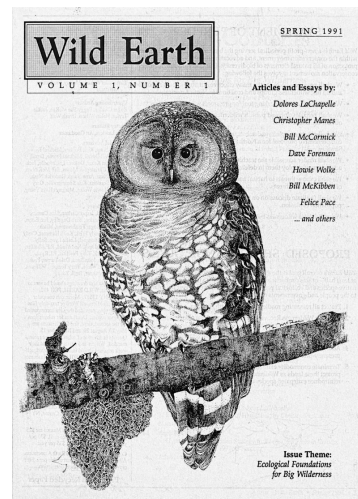
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### About the Author

Bron Taylor is professor of religion and environmental ethics at the University of Florida, where in 2002 he was recruited to develop a graduate program in Religion and Nature, and was appointed as the Samuel S. Hill Ethics Professor. His research focuses on the affective and spiritual dimensions, and political impacts, of grassroots environmental movements around the world, as well as upon the complex relationships between human beings, their religions, and the environments they inhabit. He has led or participated in a number of international initiatives promoting the conservation of biological and cultural diversity. He also edited the award-winning *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature* and subsequently founded the International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture and its affiliated *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture*, which he edits.



Bron Taylor

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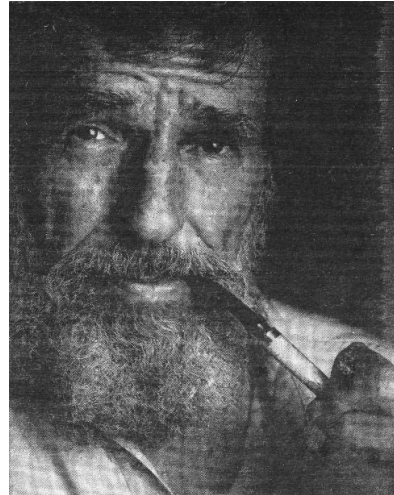


Earth First! fist

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Introducing Earth First!



Edward Abbey. See *Earth First!* 9, no. 5 .

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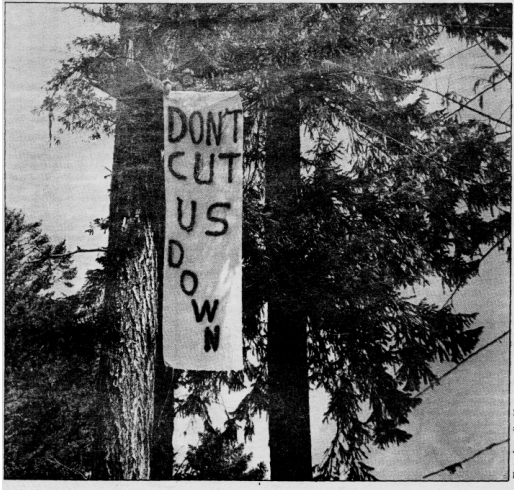
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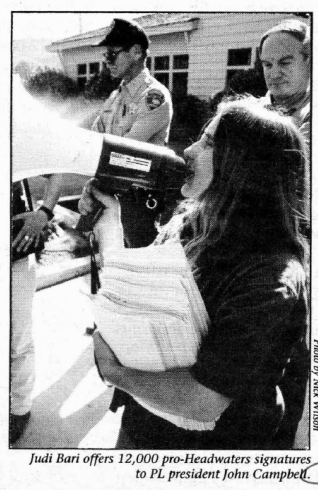


“Doug Fir,” a prodigious tree-climber, hangs a banner from an old growth tree in the Middle Santiam. See *Earth First!* 5, no. 6 .

Photograph by Jacqueline Moreau.

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The First Decade



Judi Bari offers 12,000 pro-Headwaters signatures to PL president John Campbell.

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The Second Decade



This image, from a 1990 journal edition, communicates the persistent internal struggles regarding the priorities of Earth First! See *Earth First! Journal* 10, no. 8 .

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The Third Decade and Beyond



Collage of Earth First Fists. Created with Turbocollage.

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About the Virtual Exhibition





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#### Websites linked in image captions:

- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/mml/earth-first-9-no-5>
- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/mml/earth-first-5-no-6>
- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/mml/earth-first-10-no-8>

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