



The Truth of Ecology: Nature, Culture, and Literature in America

Dana Phillips

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The Truth of Ecology is a wide-ranging, polemical appraisal of contemporary environmental thought. Focusing on the new field of ecocriticism from a thoroughly interdisciplinary perspective, this book explores topics as diverse as the history of ecology in the United States; the distortions of popular environmental thought; the influence of Critical Theory on radical science studies and radical ecology; the need for greater theoretical sophistication in ecocriticism; the contradictions of contemporary American nature writing; and the possibilities for a less devotional, "wilder" approach to ecocritical and environmental thinking.

Taking his cues from Thoreau, Stevens, and Ammons, from Wittgenstein, Barthes and Eco, from Bruno Latour and Michel Serres, from the philosophers Rorty, Hacking, and Dennett, and from the biologists Ernst Mayr and Stephen Jay Gould, author Dana Phillips emphasizes an eclectic but pragmatic approach to a variety of topics. His subject matter includes the doctrine of social construction; the question of what it means to be interdisciplinary; the disparity between scientific and literary versions of realism; the difficulty of resolving the tension between facts and values, or more broadly, between nature and culture; the American obsession with personal experience; and the intellectual challenges posed by natural history. Those challenges range from the near-impossibility of defining ecological concepts with precision to the complications that arise when a birder tries to identify chickadees in poor light on a winter's afternoon in the Poconos.

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