

Book Review

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Our history

Egerton, Frank N. 2015. **A centennial history of the Ecological Society of America**. CRC Press, Boca Raton, Florida. xvii + 271 p. \$63.96; ISBN: 978-1-4987-0069-6.

Key words: Centennial; ESA; history.

The Ecological Society of America (ESA) celebrated its centennial in August 2015. In addition to inviting synthetic articles for its journals and the *ESA Bulletin*, commissioning videos, and helping to organize events for the largest annual ESA meeting ever, the ESA's Centennial Planning Committee and subsequent Centennial Implementation Committee (full disclosure: I was a member of the former but not the latter) discussed with Frank Egerton the desirability for a book-length history of the society itself. Professor Egerton is a well-known historian of ecology, and his long-running and still ongoing series of articles in the *ESA Bulletin* on the history of the discipline highlights his deep engagement with, and careful thought about, the nuanced history of ecology, ecologists, and their interaction with the policy analysts and decision makers outside of the academy.

In opening his *Centennial history*, Egerton writes that his “purpose has been to write an even-handed, accurate, and interesting history” (p. xvii) that can be thought of “as a conversation with earlier colleagues” (p. xviii). Through a series of 38 “ecoSketches” of prominent ESA members, Egerton relates a history of ESA through the life-stories of a handful of the thousands of ecologists who have created the scientific discipline and intellectual culture within Society. The subjects of these ecoSketches include some of ESA's founders and past-presidents, individuals whose writings have had lasting influence on the field, and a few who pushed the discipline from academics into the public arena. The gender-balance of individuals chosen for profiles reflects the history of the discipline: all but three are men (the exceptional 10% are E. Lucy Braun, Jane Lubchenco, and Margaret Davis). But the integration of the ecoSketches into the main text—offset as full page-width text-boxes—is uneven. Their placement breaks up the main narrative, their stories don't consistently cohere with it, and there is no obvious ordering to them (Egerton asserts on p. xviii that they are ordered chronologically by birth dates, but such ordering only occurs in the first chapter).

At the same time, the ecoSketches are the most engaging parts of this slim volume. Science—and Ecology is no exception—is done by people working with other people, communicating results to still more people. Whether we escape to our remote field stations to study obscure organisms in pristine sites; work to describe, conserve, and protect “natural” areas; or spend endless hours coding and recoding abstruse simulation models, our work is still a human endeavor. So I relished the stories of the ecologists from Forrest Shreve (whose rarely-remembered or cited M.Sc. work on the morphology and development of the northern pitcher plant *Sarracenia purpurea* is close to my own intellectual heart) and Victor Shelford (founder of the ESA and co-editor with Shreve of *Naturalist's guide to the Americas* [1926; Williams & Wilkins, Baltimore, Maryland])

to Margaret Davis (whose many thought-provoking but ultimately incorrect yet eminently testable hypotheses and theories spurred remarkable developments in paleoecology) and Jane Lubchenco (who has done more, in my opinion, than any other ecologist to bring Ecology into the halls of power). Their lives, even encapsulated in single paragraphs summarizing their *curricula vitarum*, are interesting, engaging, and worth re-telling and remembering.

The longer narrative history unfortunately pales in comparison. Egerton has done a yeoman's job slogging through the obscure nooks and crannies of the *ESA Bulletin*, combing the Book Reviews published in *Ecology*, and examining the ongoing run of *Frontiers* for clues to the complex machinations behind the evolution and development of the ESA. The result reveals little that is new but has the virtue of putting it all in one place. We relearn of early field stations and centers of ecology, and the classic academic genealogical trees of G. Evelyn Hutchinson and Howard T. Odum are reprinted yet again (it would have been easier just to point the reader to the much more information-rich *academic tree*. org). The alphabet soup of programs spawned with ESA involvement, including the IBP (International Biological Program and its successor INTECOL (the International Association for Ecology), NIE and TIE (the proposed National Institute of Ecology and, as implemented, The Institute of Ecology), LTER (Long Term Ecological Research), SBI (Sustainable Biosphere Initiative), NEON (National Ecological Observatory Network), and SEEDS (Strategies for Education in Ecology, Development, and Sustainability) are described in degrees ranging from a sentence or two to dozens of pages. The haphazard, ad-hoc nature of the organization and development of ESA (which is by no means unique among scientific societies or other professional groups in this regard) is mirrored in the choppy writing, rough transitions between paragraphs, and unnecessary repetition of random facts and events.

The text is also marred by more than a fair share of errors that should have been caught by a copy-editor, proof-reader, or indexer. A few examples include: dropped direct objects (e.g., in the ecoSketch of Herb Bormann, Egerton writes “he discovered that the Duke forestry had methods of measuring them not being used by ecologists.” [p. 84]); the J. J. Andrews Experimental Forest rather than the H. J. Andrews Experimental Forest (p. 88); INTERCOL for INTECOL (p. 97); an incongruent number of LTER sites (27 in Figure 5.4 on p. 122 vs. 26 on p. 172) and ecoSketches (37 in the Introduction, p. xviii vs. 38 in the book); and misspelling of the names of Cooper Award winners Stephen Hubbell and Glenn Motzkin (p. 212). In these days when we value rapid publication over considered prose, publishers have laid off copy-editors, and indexing is a vanishing art, errors like these proliferate like mushrooms after a mid-summer rain.

After the mushrooms fruit and wither, however, the hyphae remain. It will be from such interacting webs that new developments in ecology, and new directions for the ESA will emerge. Frank Egerton has done ESA a great service in pulling together all of this information about the history of the society in one place. Ecologists should read the book

(and gloss over the errors) to remember from whence we have come, future historians of science should use it as the starting point for detailed analyses of different branches of ecology, and the ESA should use it to help steer itself into its second century. On behalf of my fellow members of the ESA, I extend my thanks to Frank Egerton for collating and publishing our history.

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Forest Service policy since the 1960s: a behind-the-scenes memoir

Furnish, Jim. 2015. **Toward a natural forest: the Forest Service in transition: a memoir.** Oregon State University Press, Corvallis, Oregon. 213 p. \$19.95 (paper), ISBN: 978-0-87071-813-7 (alk. paper).

Key words: ecosystem services; environmental politics; Forest Service; forestry; policy; memoir; restoration; spotted owl decision

As the manager of 193 million acres of public lands and the largest forestry research organization in the world, the U.S. Forest Service has long been a critical player in the nation's environmental management since its founding in 1905. The agency has thus been the focus of numerous studies of environmental history, and its lands have served as laboratories for generations of ecological researchers. Jim Furnish's memoir *Toward a natural forest* provides a rich contribution to the literature of Forest Service history, focusing on the critical decades since the 1960s. With perhaps the sole exception of Gifford Pinchot, no administrator from the highest levels of the agency has penned a more compelling, honest, and forthright account of historical change in the Forest Service.

In many ways Furnish tells a very traditional, routine account of his own career progression. Although he was raised in Iowa, spending summers alongside his father's geology field work in Wyoming instilled a love for Western lands, a passion he is not afraid to share in this memoir. After completing his degree in forestry, he started with the Forest Service helping plan timber sales in Oregon and Maine. From there the book details each career stage—including district ranger, forest planner, and forest supervisor—to his ultimate role as deputy chief from 1999 to 2001, and chapters are organized mainly around his own professional positions.

Furnish's critical role in major Forest Service transformations of recent decades—particularly implementing ecosystem management principles on the Siuslaw National Forest in Oregon and designing the Clinton-era Roadless Initiative—makes his account more compelling than simply personal memoir. Weak points of the book arise when Furnish settles into narrow accounts of his own career development, but the strengths emerge when he uses his experiences to illuminate the broader context of recent history.

It is the historical stage that makes Furnish's story meaningful, the dramatic, forced transformation of the Forest Service away from its post-war focus on timber extraction. Furnish makes a good case that federal judge William Dwyer's

1999 injunction in the spotted owl case, shutting down most logging in Northwest forests, initiated a third major era in USFS history. The stewardship era from 1905 to World War II and the extraction emphasis of the decades following the war are well documented in the historical literature. Furnish, from his prominent leadership positions in the years following the Dwyer Decision, claims to have helped guide the agency toward a new paradigm based on ecological restoration.

Although new findings in the field of forest ecology are a driving force of change during the decades Furnish covers, his own experience is in policy. Thus, he provides only cursory discussions of the changing science. In the realm of policy, however, the book illuminates some important stages, such as the use of FORPLAN modeling for timber management, the forest planning process following passage of the National Forest Management Act of 1976, and the floundering of USFS leadership immediately following the Dwyer Decision. His discussion of the rather preposterous "new perspectives" initiative illustrates his point of how difficult it was for the agency to respond to new realities. (As an employee of the Forest Service at the time, I recall colleagues mocking "new perspectives" by creating interpretive dances as a way to help implement the new plan.)

In its policy development, the Forest Service was very slow to respond to shifting public attitudes and scientific research on the environment, and Furnish is clearly critical of the bureaucratic resistance. "How many polls," he writes, "that show 90 percent of people hate clear-cuts does one have to read before concluding that it's time to do something different?" He recalls many cases when he clashed with colleagues who did not share his growing environmental concerns. Whether he truly was ahead of his time, as he portrays himself, is tough to gauge. To his credit, however, Furnish's tone is not arrogant; he treats these adversaries with respect. The sole exception is Forest Service chief Dale Robertson, who receives a distinctly negative portrayal as the epitome of the arrogance and intransigence of the agency's old guard in the 1980s and 1990s.

Furnish's intent is to present as parallel stories his own professional journey and the transformation of the agency over a tumultuous era. He recalls, "I witnessed and participated in actions that had the feel of a big schooner heeling over to tack to a new course." While the personal memoir is not always compelling, it serves as a valuable window to better understand such significant changes in the agency. Furnish structures his narrative to tell a hopeful story of decline and restoration of both public forests and the agency that manages them. The broader trend of events, he writes, "restored my