

FROM READERS



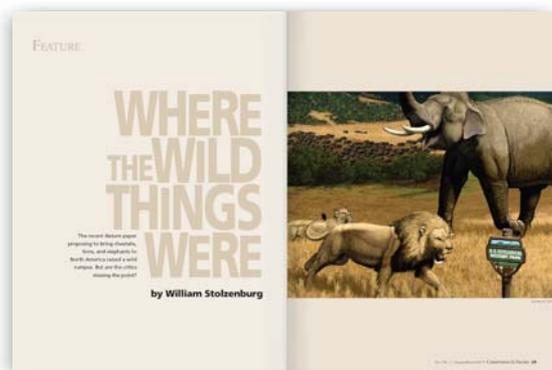
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Where the Wild Things Are

I am in favor of re-wilding North American grasslands with megafauna adapted for our temperate climate. (“Where the Wild Things Were,” *Conservation In Practice*, Jan-Mar 2006). But I noticed an omission from the discussion in Mr. Stolzenburg’s article: the difference in latitude—and therefore climate—between the land area within the lower 48 states of the U.S. and Africa. The lower 48 states (and the grasslands therein) lie between 30°N and 50°N latitude. Conversely, the bulk of Africa’s landmass lies between 30°S and 30°N latitudes. The major African land preserves that harbor lion prides lie between 20°S and 20°N latitude. Are African lions (and elephants and camels, etc.) adapted to the sub-freezing temperatures that would

surely be encountered in most North American grasslands? Why was this seemingly basic but profound ecological factor omitted from the article’s discussion?

ADAM BABCOCK

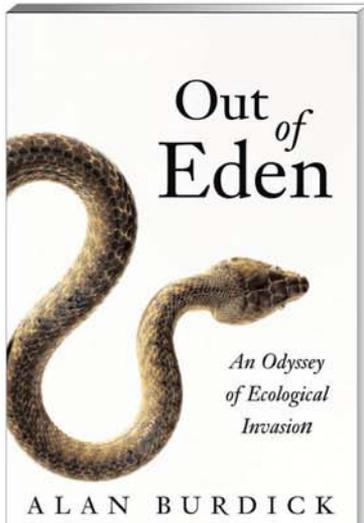


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Bon Appétit

Joe Roman’s article “Bon Appétit” (*Conservation In Practice*, Jan-Mar 2006) presents an interesting twist on

the standard harvesting-of-nature-for-humans concept. Although the removal of invasive species by any action is probably worthwhile and wider recognition of the impacts of such species is valuable, the inherent dangers in promoting an industry of invasive species must be recognized. In fact, the industry of harvesting such species was often what led to their introduction around the world (and subsequent liberation into the wild). There is a fine line between creating an opportunity (e.g., creating an unmanaged open season on a pest species) and having that opportunity be more actively managed, with associated industry creation and economic investment. If all goes well, a pest population is controlled—perhaps so much so that final eradication may be possible. Those with invested economic interest in harvesting a species are, however, unlikely to want to see it eradicated and, in the worst case, may spread it further by new introductions elsewhere. In New Zealand, the introduced dama wallaby (*Macropus euginia*) is currently experiencing range expansion



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through spread by those who see it as a valuable resource, despite efforts to finally eradicate this species from the mainland. Due to political lobbying, the management and protection of these pest species as a resource must now be considered in all conservation actions. Even under the best case scenario where a harvested pest can almost be eradicated, the decrease in abundance would have complex social ramifications for individuals or communities whose livelihoods

are associated with employment in any industry utilizing the pests. Worse still, the invested interest in a pest species can have negative ramifications for wider conservation efforts. Several mammal pest species are controlled over large forested areas of New Zealand using anticoagulant poisons, but sub-

lethal bioaccumulation of toxin in hunted deer and pigs has led in places to an end to these poison control efforts and to recurrent loss of previous



conservation gains. Although the idea is appealing, we must not let history repeat itself by creating industries that create exportable value in pest species.

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Taking the Wild Seriously

Thanks for your latest “Uneasy Chair” column, “What Does ‘Wild’ Really Mean?” (*Conservation In Practice*, Jan-Mar 2006). Indeed, this is a topic that we take very seriously at the Wildlife Conservation Society. So seriously, in fact, that we published a map of what wild means—at least as best we can get at it using current data. It’s called the human footprint. It was published (for the second time) in *State of the Wild 2006* (1). The nice thing about a map like the human footprint is that you can ask it to give you wild places for any place in any terms you like. Our “last of the wild” map is one version of the wild places of the world (relatively defined), but we’ve also used it to ask where the wildest places in all countries of the world, or even in regions like the northeast U.S., are. In fact, for any geo-

graphic context we can ask where the relatively wilder places are, down to one-square kilometer resolution. All this is laid out in a *BioScience* paper (2) and on our website (www.wcs.org), and many of these same themes were picked up in last September’s *National Geographic* magazine. I don’t mind your asking what wild means—because it is an important question to ask in today’s world—but your column gives the impression that you read only the foreword and the afterword of *State of the Wild: 2006* and then decided to provoke us. In fact, there is a lot of good stuff in between and elsewhere out there, much of which could give you an answer.

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1. Guynup, S. (ed.). 2005. *State of the Wild 2006: A Global Portrait of Wild-*

life, Wildlands, and Oceans. Island Press, Washington, D.C.

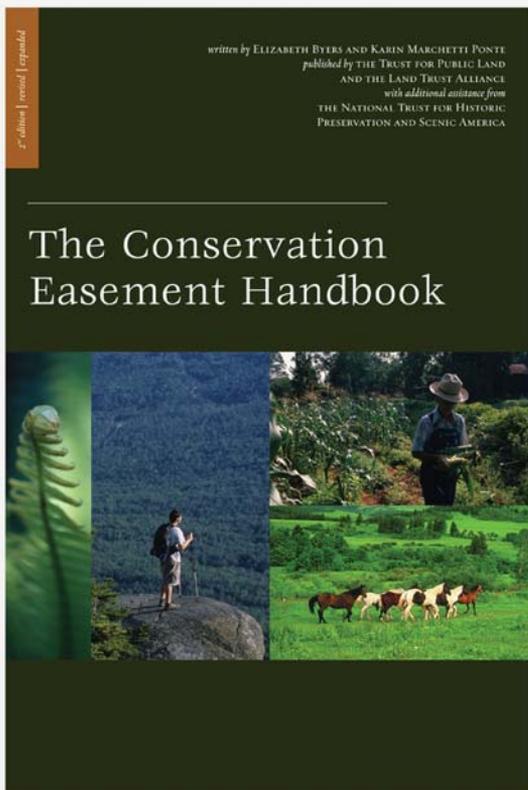
2. Sanderson, E. et al. 2002. The human footprint and the last of the wild. *BioScience* 52 (10): 891-904.

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Right Brain-Left Brain

The Long-Term Ecological Reflections project (*Conservation In Practice*, Jan-Mar 2006) enlists writers to translate and interpret science for the public. But if a picture is worth a thousand words, perhaps there should be room for visual artists in this project. Surely the visual arts are at least as capable as prose and poetry of conveying the deep ecological connection between people and their environment.

ANDREW NELSON
Santa Barbara, California



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