

## Selected Reference Books By and About Aldo Leopold

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### Introduction

It seems a reasonable argument that no other conservationists in the history of western civilization has been so widely read and quoted as has Aldo Leopold. Western writer and conservationist Wallace Stegner referred to quotations from Leopold as being biblical in nature and to Leopold himself as an “American Isaiah.”

It is true that Leopold’s writings of many decades ago have turned out to be profoundly prophetic, and almost everyone concerned about natural resource conservation gravitates to them. This, of course, is often a double-edged sword, as his quotations may often be taken out of context, and used to support a wide variety of positions.

A second edge of the sword is the beautiful prose in which Leopold so characteristically writes to draw the reader to a level of deeper thinking. However, the poetic beauty sometimes overwhelms and displaces the deeper meaning intended by Leopold. Dr. Susan Flader, a Leopold biographer, made this point well when she wrote that of the vast numbers of people who quoted the “land ethic,” few would understand it as Leopold had intended.

Beyond all of these things lies Leopold’s absolute passion for the land and all things “wild and free.” I think that it is his passion for land, and his eloquence in expressing that passion, that so captivates us, and causes us to so frequently quote him for authority and rationale of our own feelings and points of view.

I can not imagine a *thinking* trail horseman who does not identify with Leopold in how he thought about land and his place and function as a part of it. As Leopold saw it, as humans went about making a place for themselves within ecosystems (the land), they should be seeking a harmonious relationship with the other components and processes inherent to these systems – these ecosystems upon which we depend. Good horsemen are well acquainted with the idea and the importance of harmony. To Leopold, “Conservation is a state of harmony between men and land.”

### Books By Aldo Leopold

Leopold, Aldo. 1949. *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There*. Oxford University Press. New York, New York. 226 pages.

Published first in 1949 this book had run quite a gauntlet of rejections before being accepted for publication. Leopold had submitted the book manuscript under the title “Great Possessions.” The publishers later changed that title to its current wording. Leopold was notified just a few days before his death in April 1948 that his book had been accepted.

I doubt that he had any idea of the far-reaching consequences of this collection of essays that he had written, as he intimates, for the “average citizen” or the “average man.” No other single piece of literature has so profoundly affected American conservation. Between 1949 and 1960, only a few thousand copies were sold. However, with the beginning of the environmental movement it became a “bible” and a “cornerstone.” It became great perhaps because, as Luna Leopold put it in “Wild by Law,” because “it expressed what people felt in their hearts but had not been able to articulate.”

Today this book is published in numerous languages and has sold many millions of copies. It truly is the touchstone of the conservationist.

**Leopold, Aldo. 1966. *A Sand County Almanac - With Essays on Conservation From Round River*. Ballantine Books, New York, New York. 295 pages. (ISBN 0-345-25336-1)**

This is the little paperback book with which most readers today are familiar. It contains all of the essays of the original book plus several additions taken from Round River.

**Leopold, Aldo. 1987. *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There*. Oxford University Press. New York, New York. 228 pages. (ISBN 0-19-505305-2)**

Oxford University Press published this as a “Centennial Edition” in honor of the centennial anniversary of Aldo Leopold’s birth. The only change is an Introduction titled “The Delights and Dilemmas of A Sand County Almanac” written by Robert Finch. Finch’s contribution is excellent giving insight both into Leopold the writer and the book itself.

**Leopold, Luna (editor). 1993 (first published 1953). *Round River*. Oxford University Press. New York, New York. 173 pages. (ISBN 0-19-501563-0)**

This little book is based in part on the journals of Aldo Leopold but also contains a number of essays that were later published in "A Sand County Almanac - With Essays on Conservation From Round River." The journal materials are important to understanding the backgrounds upon which Leopold based such essays as "The Green Lagoons" ("The Delta Colorado, pages 10-30) and "Song of the Gaviolon" ("Sierra Madre, 1937", pages 130-141). To me, these writings demonstrate that while Leopold loved to hunt, he loved even more the opportunity to *think* in a wilderness setting.

### Books About Aldo Leopold

Brown, David E., and Neil B. Carmony. 1995. *Aldo Leopold's Southwest*. University of New Mexico Press. Albuquerque, NM. 250 pages. (ISBN 0-8263-1580-1)

Previously published by Stackpole Books (1990) under the title *Aldo Leopold's Wilderness*.

From the foreword by Dale A. Jones:

"David Brown and Neil Carmony have assembled a selection of Leopold's previously unpublished but now obscure writings into a volume that elegantly illuminates the crucial role of his southwestern experience in the development of his most important ecological ideas. The articles, chronologically arranged, give excellent insight into how Leopold matured from a young forester groping for answers into the most renowned ecologist of the twentieth century. Following each article, Brown and Carmony skillfully analyse the pathways of Leopold's thought at the time."

Flader, Susan L. 1974, 1994. *Thinking Like a Mountain – Aldo Leopold and the Evolution of an Ecological Attitude Toward Deer, Wolves, and Forests*. University of Nebraska Press. Lincoln, Nebraska. 284 pages. (1974 ISBN 0-8032-6850-5)

This book is biographical in nature, but its purpose is to deal with the evolution of Aldo Leopold's manner of thinking. It focuses on the evolution of thinking from a goal of large predator eradication to large predator preservation. Understanding this background gives one a great deal of insight into Leopold's essays "Thinking Like a Mountain" and "Escudilla" where his confessions of past ecological "sins" are rather subtle. The importance of this book to any conservationists is to realize that the thinking of the foremost American conservationist evolved with time and experience.

**Meine, Curt. 1988. *Aldo Leopold – His Life and Work*. The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, Wisconsin. 638 pages. (ISBN 0-299-11490-2)**

**Without doubt this book is the defining authority on the life and work of Aldo Leopold. It paints Leopold as very human in his personal life, but also as one with a deep passion for the land. It gives important insight into Leopold's firm commitment to a striving for conservation while sometimes being the target of public ridicule and rejection. Meine gives us important information on the experiences that shaped Leopold's thinking from childhood to death, including those at The Shack and interactions with other pioneering scientists and conservationists of the time. While he portrays Leopold as being very human, he also clearly paints a super-human commitment to purpose. For the serious student of Leopold, this book is a "must read," and more than once.**

**McCabe, Robert A. 1987. *Aldo Leopold – The Professor*. Palmer Publications, Inc., Amherst, Wisconsin. 172 pages (ISBN 0-9110122-98-9)**

**Robert McCabe was a student of Leopold's at the University of Wisconsin and who later became professor of wildlife management there. In addition to studying under Leopold, McCabe sometimes traveled and hunted with him. The book offers additional insights into Leopold the man and some of the trials and tribulations that he endured from the point of view of a personal relationship.**

***Tanner, Thomas (editor). 1987. Aldo Leopold – The Man and His Legacy*. Soil Conservation Society of America, Ankeny, Iowa. 175 pages. (ISBN 0-935734-13-9)**

**This little book of essays was published in celebration of the centennial year of Aldo Leopold's birth. Essays are by notable politicians with an interest in conservation such as Stewart Udall, former Secretary of the Interior, and Bruce Babbitt, then Governor of Arizona and later Secretary of Interior; wildlife management scientists, conservation history and philosophy scholars, three of the Leopold children, and Aldo's brother, Frederick. While these essays generally praise the work of Leopold, some are also critically written about his science and his writing.**

**Callicott, J. Baird (editor). 1987. *Companion to A Sand County Almanac – Interpretive and Critical Essays*. The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, Wisconsin. 308 pages. (ISBN 0-299-11230-6)**

**This book of essays is a critical dissection of “A Sand County Almanac” by historians and philosophers. The work is produced by excellent scholarship and it is intense; therefore, it is not light reading. Perhaps one of the most important contributions for the average reader of “A Sand County Almanac” is the paper by Dennis Ribbens which comments on Leopold’s original Introduction to “Great Possessions” – the title under which “A Sand County Almanac” was first submitted. The Introduction was autobiographical in nature and gives the reader great insight into who Leopold was and why he had written the way that he did. Of particular importance were the confessions of some of his own mistakes in land management.**

**While this book of essays is helpful to the serious student of Leopold, much of it seems to be written for scholarly review and comment. I personally found this to be in stark contrast with “A Sand County Almanac” which Leopold had clearly written to get the attention of the “average citizen” or “average man,” as he often put it.**

**Flader, Susan L. and J. Baird Callicott (editors). 1991. *The River of the Mother of God and Other Essays by Aldo Leopold*. The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, Wisconsin. 384 pages. (ISBN 0-299-12760-5)**

**Flader and Callicott have assembled 60 previously unpublished essays by Aldo Leopold. They are presented in a chronological order to give the reader an appreciation of Leopold’s evolution in thinking from 1904 (when a boy of 17 years) to 1947. It was the summer of 1947 that he penned his final draft of “The Land Ethic” – capstone essay to “A Sand County Almanac” and to the life of Aldo Leopold. As Leopold died in April 1948, these essays truly represent the spectrum of his literary life. It also gives the reader an appreciation of Leopold’s prolific writing.**

**Lorbiecki, Marybeth. 1996. *Aldo Leopold – A Fierce Green Fire*. Falcon Publishing Co., Inc., Helena and Billings, Montana. (ISBN 1-56044-478-9)**

**Lorbiecki offers a light biography of Leopold with a strong environmentalist’s bent that his life was focused on a wilderness preservation goal. In my view, this book substantially misses the measure of the breadth and depth of Leopold’s values and thinking.**

**Callicott, J. Baird, and Eric T. Freyfogle (editors). 1999. *For The Health of The Land*. Island Press. Washington, D.C. 243 pages. (ISBN 1-55963-763-3)**

This is a collection of 52 previously unpublished essays on active wildlife management in which Leopold suggests to landowners and citizens practices that could be undertaken to enhance wildlife habitats.

Meine, Curt and Richard L. Knight (editors). 1999. *The Essential Aldo Leopold – Quotations and Commentaries*. The University of Wisconsin Press. Madison, Wisconsin. 362 pages. (ISBN 0-299-16550-7)

This book is comprised of 21 chapters, each with its own conservation topic that is introduced by a recognized conservation scholar. The introduction is then followed by a list of quotes pertinent to the topic and taken from Leopold writings. Of particular interest to equestrian recreationists would be Chapter 3 with the topic Outdoor Recreation and the title “Leopold and the “Still Unlovely Mind”.”

Meine, Curt. 2004. *Correction Lines – Essays on Land, Leopold, and Conservation*. Island Press, Washington, DC. 296 pages.

**(Description to be written)**

### Other Books on Leopoldian Thinking

Leopold’s writings are prominent in the central thinking in the following books of essays. Dr. Callicott is one of the foremost scholars of Leopold’s thinking and writing. His presentations are excellent and strongly academic. While these books make strong contributions to academia and the realms of environmental philosophy, Leopold’s “average citizen” may find them somewhat laborious.

Callicott, J. Baird. 1989. *In Defense of The Land Ethic – Essays in Environmental Philosophy*. State University of New York Press, Albany, New York. 325 pages. (ISBN 0-88706-900-2)

Callicott, J. Baird. 1999. *Beyond The Land Ethic – More Essays in Environmental Philosophy*. State University of New York Press, Albany, New York. 427 pages. (ISBN 0-7914-4083-4)