

★ **Wild by Design: The Rise of Ecological Restoration**

Laura J. Martin

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Laura J. Martin's *Wild by Design* is essential reading, raising pertinent questions about what it means to be “wild” in an era of widespread ecological disruption.

The concept of wildness itself is called into question via examples of drastic human intervention in the fates of endangered species like bison and whooping cranes. In an urgent, academic style that underscores the global impact of anthropogenic ecological damage, the book articulates difficult, dense topics with clarity. It teases apart the threads of historical conservation efforts and weaves them into a coherent, pressing narrative history—vital for professional ecologists, botanists, and biologists.

Evidence of intensive research is apparent throughout. Stark photographs sourced from archives illustrate the sheer damage done by early attempts to manage the population of predatory or undesirable species. Foremost among these is the image of a man posing against a mountain of bison skulls while another stands atop the pile. Extensive historical context is given throughout to situate the scientific aspects of such work alongside the cultural and sociopolitical zeitgeist of the time.

In examining the question of what it means for an ecosystem to be wild, Martin draws important parallels between Indigenous sovereignty or the lack thereof and environmental protection. The rewilding efforts made by scientists who are part of a settler-colonist mechanism rely upon the fallacy of an “untouched” land, the book shows, highlighting the role of Manifest Destiny and imperialist lines of thought in the widespread destruction of ecological systems within the United States.

Wild by Design is certain to engender heated discussions about ecology in an increasingly industrialized world, as well as raising questions about if, when, and how humans should intervene to save endangered species.

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