



The CER Lunchtime Lectures 2025

The Geography of Urban Nature

Free and Open to the Public – bring a lunch and learn

Locations, Day of the Month, Times –

Every 1st Thursday (except January 23) – 1230-2pm

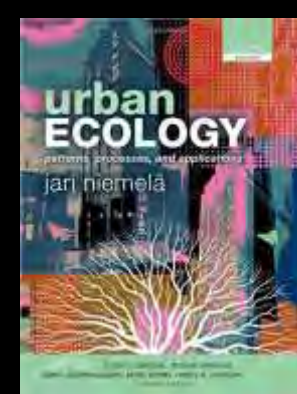
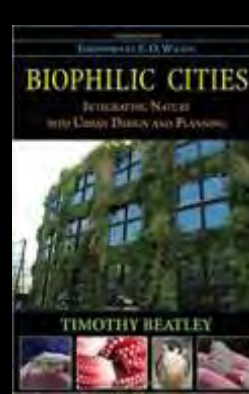
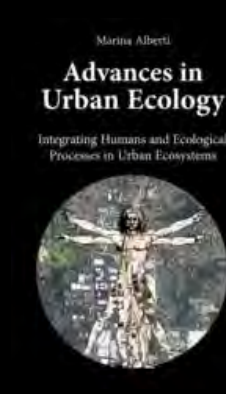
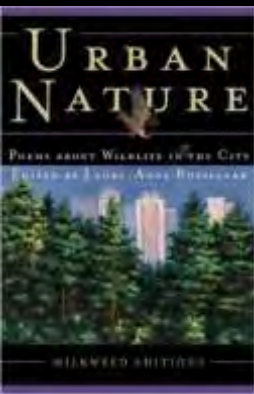
– University of Texas Peter O'Donnell Building (POB) Room 2.402

Every 2nd Monday – Noon-1pm

– Austin Water Center for Environmental Research (CER) at Hornsby Bend

Every 2nd Thursday – Noon-1pm

– Senior Activity Center-Lamar (SAC-Lamar) at 2874 Shoal Crest Ave





The Geography of Urban Nature

Concepts of Urban Nature

January	Urban Lifeworlds: Perspectives on Nature and the City
February	The Urban Wilderness: Wildness and the American City
March	The Urban Pastoral: Parkland and the Garden City
April	The Elemental City: Cycles, Services and Urban Ecology

Urban Natural History, Ecology and Encounter

May	The Nonhuman City: Urban Habitats and Unnatural History
June	The Aquatic City: The Nature of Urban Waterways
July	The Terrestrial City: Greenspace and the Urban Forest
August	The Aerial City: Denizens of the Urban Sky
September	Unnatural Encounters: Writing Urban Nature

The Proper Place of Urban Nature

October	Nature Out of Place: Biological Slumming and Urban Ecology
November	Design with Nature: Urban Management and the Ecological City
December	Marginal Nature: Urban Wastelands and the Geography of Nature



Urban Lifeworlds: Perspectives on Nature and the City

Kevin Michael Anderson, Ph.D.
Austin Water – Center for Environmental Research



Concepts of American Nature

Wilderness



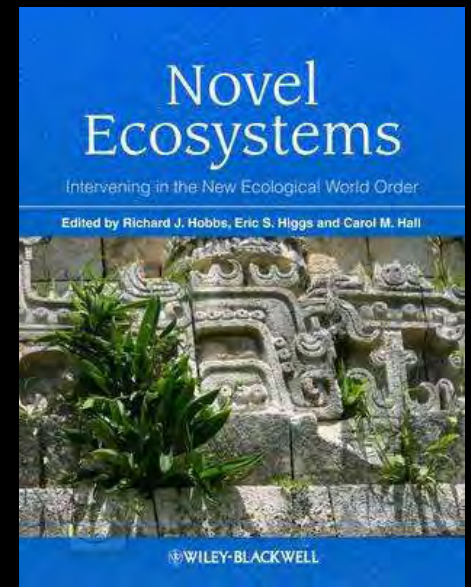
Pastoral



Urban



New



American Concept(s) of Nature

In the United States, the kinds of nature that we celebrate are *wilderness and pastoral nature*.



The American Concepts of Nature and Urbanized America

In American cities and towns, we perceive nature filtered through a ***conceptual framework that prejudices its ecological and cultural value.***

Wilderness



Pastoral Nature



Urban (Suburban) Nature?

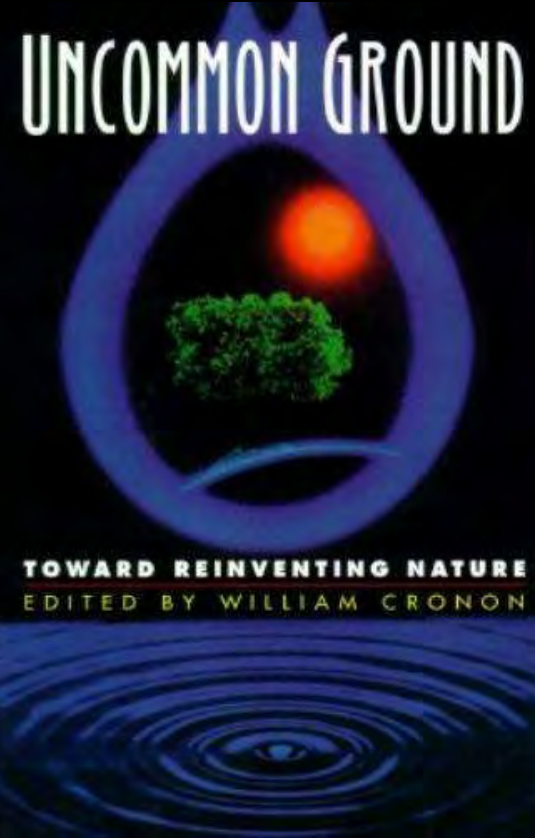


The Proper Place of Nature

“We need to embrace the full continuum of a natural landscape that is also cultural, in which *the city, the suburb, the pastoral, and the wild each has its proper place*, which we permit ourselves to celebrate without needlessly denigrating the others.”

“The Trouble with Wilderness or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature”
William Cronon

Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature
(1995)



“Established Notions of Nature” and Urban Nature

“Urban nature is not sublime...There’s too much sterility in the form of roofs and pavement, and, oddly enough, there’s also too much wildness, too many weeds and wooded borders and tangled banks, not to mention vacant lots going to brush.

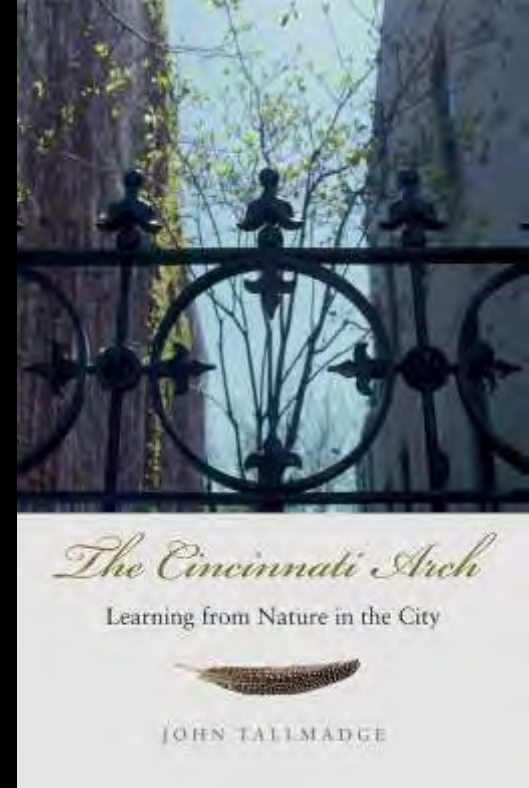
Of course, “wilderness” won’t do to describe such landscapes either. Despite the degree of wildness, there’s too much human impact, too many alien species, too few large animals to meet the legal and cultural criteria.

The fact is that urban landscapes are just too mixed up, chaotic, and confused to fit our established notions of beauty and value in nature.

Maybe it’s not really nature at all, not a real ecosystem, just a bunch of weeds and exotics mixed up with human junk.”

John Tallmadge

The Cincinnati Arch: Learning from Nature in the City (2004)



Natural What?



Urban Nature – The Nonhuman Perspective



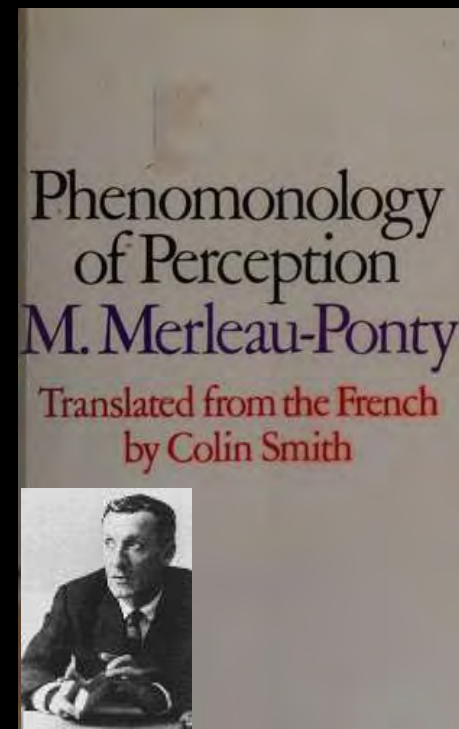
The Lifeworld – Marcel Merleau-Ponty (1908 – 1961)

“The life-world is the world of our immediately lived experience, as we live it, prior to all our thoughts about it. It is that which is present to us in our everyday tasks and enjoyments—reality as it engages us before being analyzed by our theories and our science.

The life-world is the world that we count on without necessarily paying it much attention, the world of the clouds overhead and the ground underfoot, of getting out of bed and preparing food and turning on the tap for water. Easily overlooked, this primordial world is always already there when we begin to reflect or philosophize.

It is not a private, but a collective, dimension—the common field of our lives and the other lives with which ours are entwined—and yet it is profoundly ambiguous and indeterminate, since our experience of this field is always relative to our situation within it.

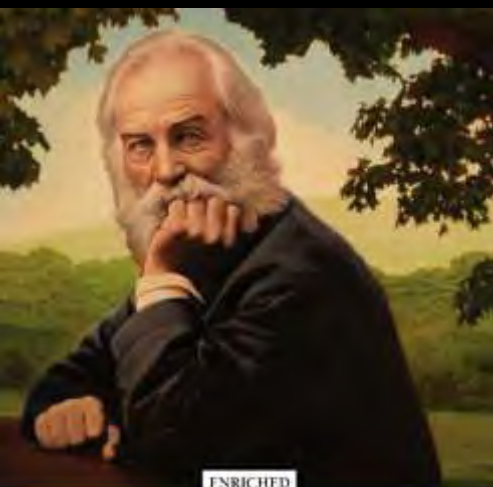
The life-world is thus the world as we organically experience it in its enigmatic multiplicity and open-endedness, prior to conceptually freezing it into a static space of “facts”—prior, indeed, to conceptualizing it in any complete fashion.” - Abrams



Nonhuman Lifeworld – Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*

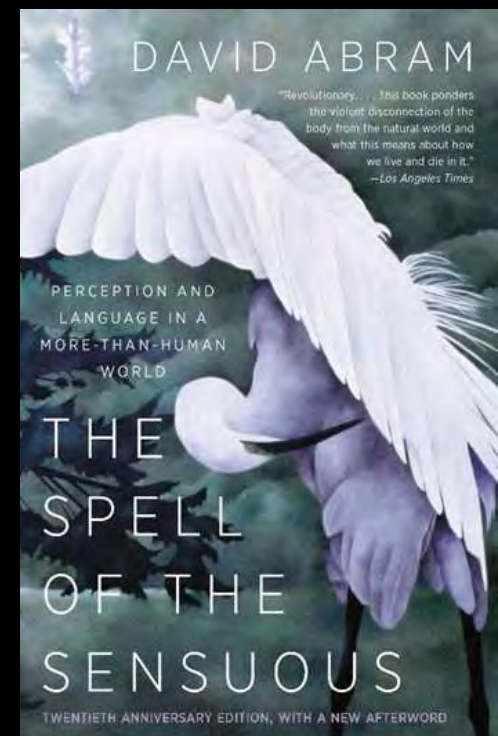
*I think I could turn and live with animals, they are so placid and self-contain'd;
I stand and look at them long and long.*

*They do not sweat and whine about their condition;
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins;
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God;
Not one is dissatisfied—not one is demented with the mania of owning things;
Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived thousands of years ago;
Not one is respectable or industrious over the whole earth.*



ENRICHED
CLASSIC

LEAVES OF GRASS
WALT WHITMAN



DAVID ABRAM

"Revolutionary... This book ponders the violent disconnection of the body from the natural world and what this means about how we live and die in it."
—Los Angeles Times

PERCEPTION AND
LANGUAGE IN A
MORE-THAN-HUMAN
WORLD

THE
SPELL
OF THE
SENSUOUS

TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY EDITION, WITH A NEW AFTERWORD

Urban Nature – The Nonhuman Perspective

What is a City?

An Ecosystem





Colonial Nesting Mammals

Congress Avenue Bridge 1.5 -2 Million

Mexican Free-tailed Bats

Colonial Nesting Mammals



Black-Tailed Prairie Dog



Colonial Nesting Mammals



The Socioecological City



Human Perspectives on Nature and the City

- The Sacred and the Mundane
- Wilderness and the City
- Natural vs. Artificial
- Pristine vs. Degraded
- Native vs. Nonnative

Once a rock dove,
now the winged rat
of the city



Socioecological
Narratives of
Urban Nature



“Established Notions of Nature”
Myth/Narrative – Urban Nature and The Garden
Harmony and Innocence within the Garden Wall



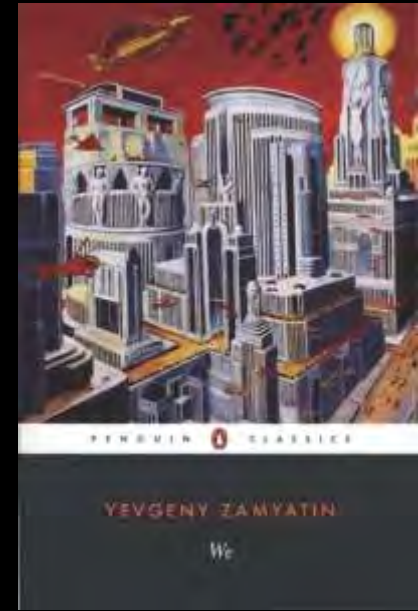
What Nature Means - Wild Nature and The City

Irrational, Ugly Nature vs. Rationalism and Modernity

“Oh, how great and divinely limiting is the wisdom of walls. This Green Wall is, I think, the greatest invention ever conceived.

Man ceased to be a wild animal the day he built the first wall; Man ceased to be a wild man only on the day when the Green Wall was completed, when, ***by this wall we isolated our machine-like, perfect world from the irrational, ugly world of trees, birds, and beasts.***”

- Eugene Zamyatin, *We* (1921)



Negative Second Nature – The Death of Nature and The Urban

“Nature, destroyed as such, has already had to be reconstructed at another level, the level of ‘second nature’ i.e. the town and the urban.

The town, anti-nature or non-nature and yet second nature, heralds the future world, the world of the generalized urban.

Nature...dies. It gives way to produced space, to the urban.”

Sets the Stage for the 19th Century Narrative of Redemptive Urban Nature



THE PRODUCTION OF
SPACE

Henri Lefebvre

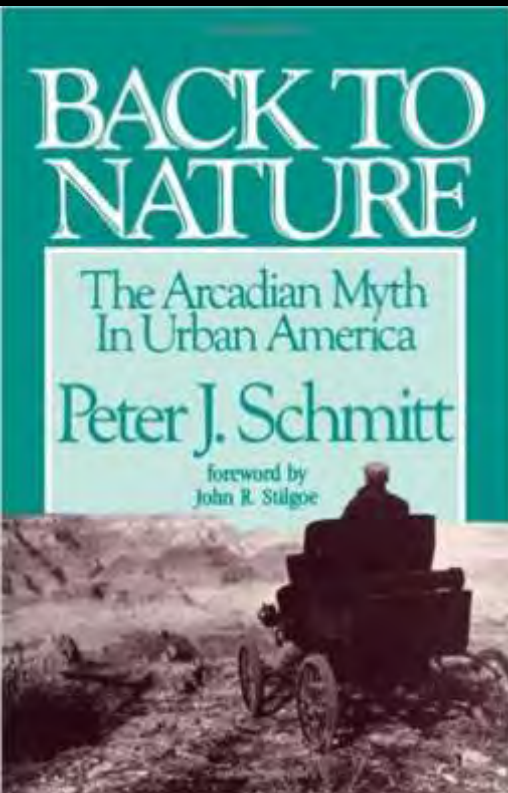


TRANSLATED BY
DONALD NICHOLSON-SMITH

Narrative of Redemptive Urban Nature

19th Century American Nature and Culture

- What it is
- What it does
- What it means
- Where it is



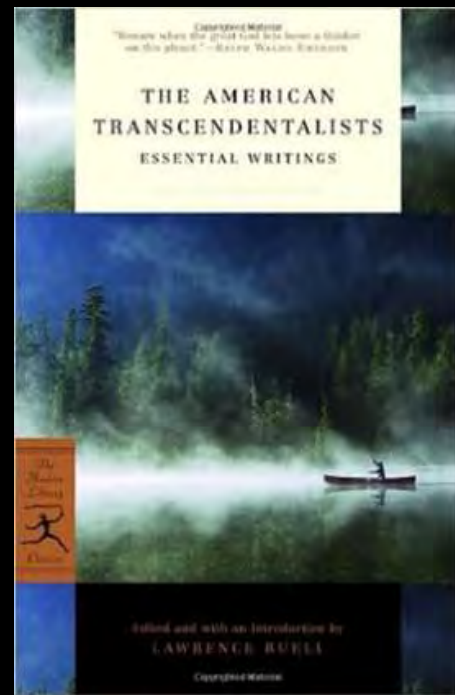
What Nature Is and Does - Transcendentalism

The Romantic idea of Nature transformed into the American Transcendentalist idea of Nature in Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay, "Nature"

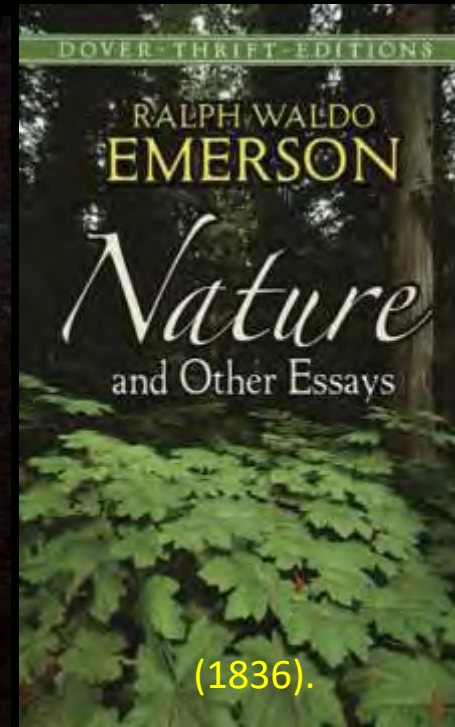
Nature contact as therapy for a diseased, over-civilized heart.

- Nature is a source of sensations--healthy feelings.
- Humans can discover emotional health in nature.
- Such health leads to moral and spiritual clarity.

The Urban Disease – the City/Town makes you sick



(1803 –1882)



(1836).

Where it is and What it means
Thoreau, the City, and the Tonic of Nature

“The West of which I speak is but another name for the Wild; and what I have been preparing to say is, that in ***Wildness is the preservation of the world.***

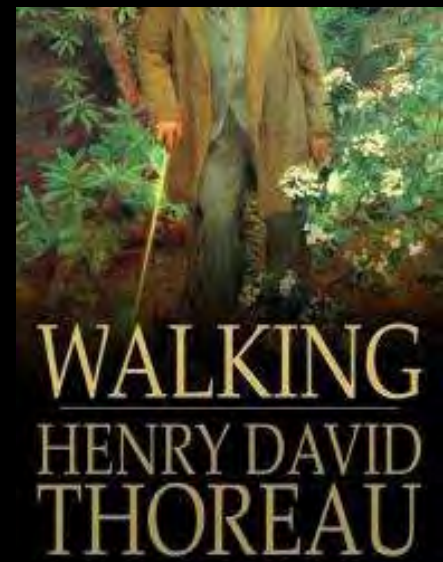
Every tree sends its fibers forth in search of the Wild. **The cities import it at any price.** Men plow and sail for it. From the forest and wilderness come the tonics and barks which brace mankind.

Hope and the future for me are not in lawns and cultivated fields, not in towns and cities...”

The Transcendentalist concept of nature as a tonic for the urban dis-ease



1817-1862



(1862)



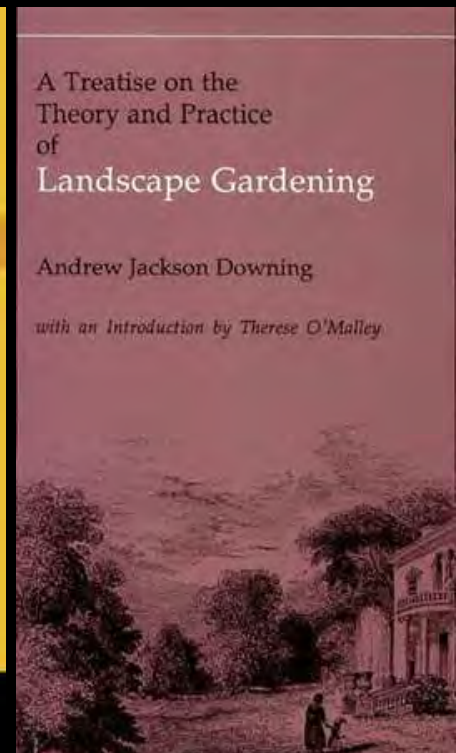
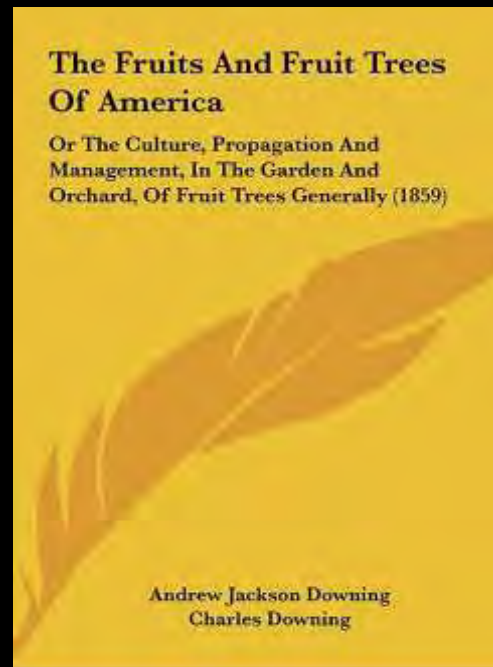
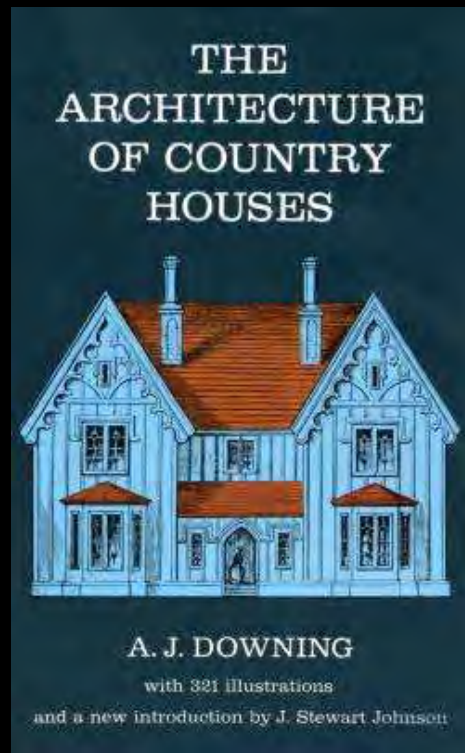
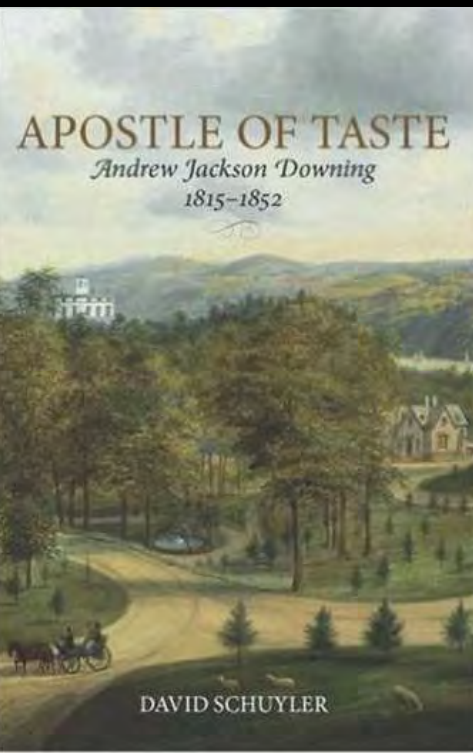
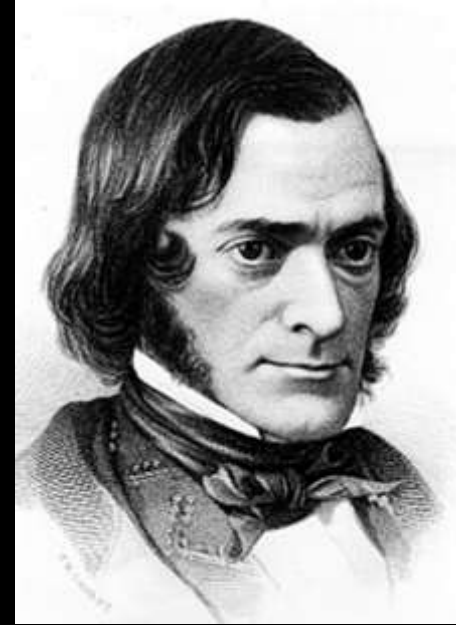
What it is and Where it is

The Cure – Import Nature at Any Price

Andrew Jackson Downing 1815-1852

A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening, Adapted to North America (1841) it was the first book of its kind published in the United States.

Editor of *The Horticulturist* magazine (1846–52)



What it does - Redemptive Urban Nature

The Social and Political Role of Urban Nature

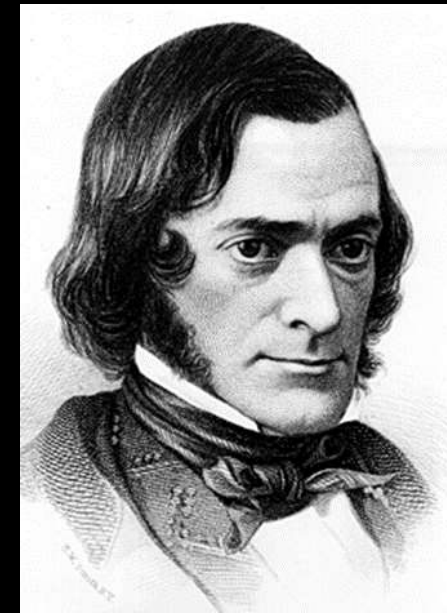
“Plant spacious parks in your cities, and unloose their gates as wide as the gates of morning to the whole people...

As there are no dark places at noonday, so education and culture – the true sunshine of the soul – will **banish the plague-spots of democracy.**”

The New York Park Plan 1851



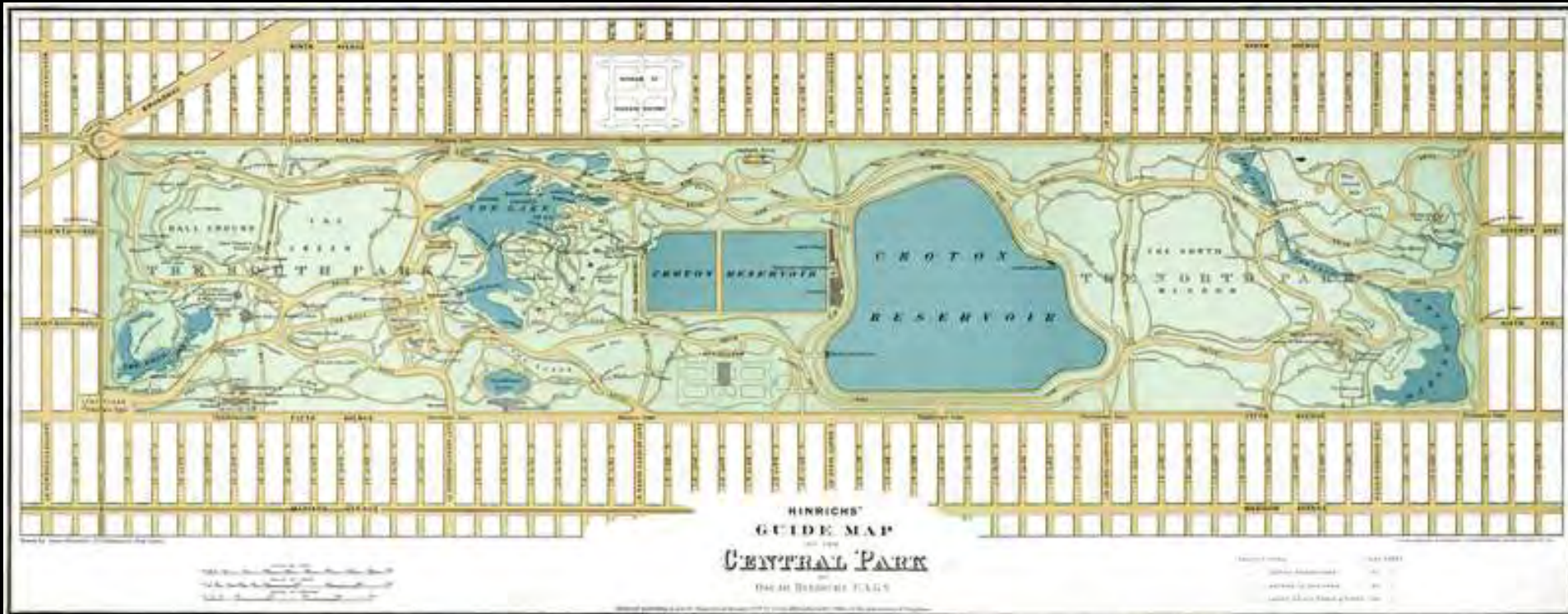
Dies 1852 – at 37





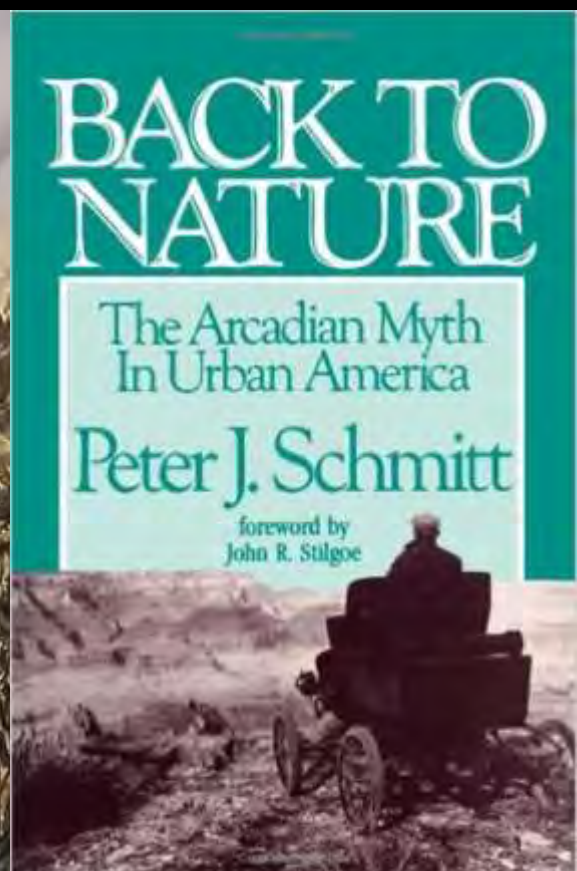
Redemptive Urban Nature Banish the Plague-spots of Democracy

Olmsted observed that New York's Central Park had a "harmonizing and refining influence upon the most unfortunate and most lawless classes of the city - an influence favorable to **courtesy, self-control, and temperance.**"



Urban Pastoral Democracy – Banish the Plague-spots of Democracy

“Like Downing, Olmsted believed that the rural, picturesque landscape contrasted with and counteracted the confining and unhealthy conditions of the crowded urban environment and served to strengthen society by providing a **place where all classes could mingle** in contemplation and enjoyment of the pastoral experience.” Schmitt

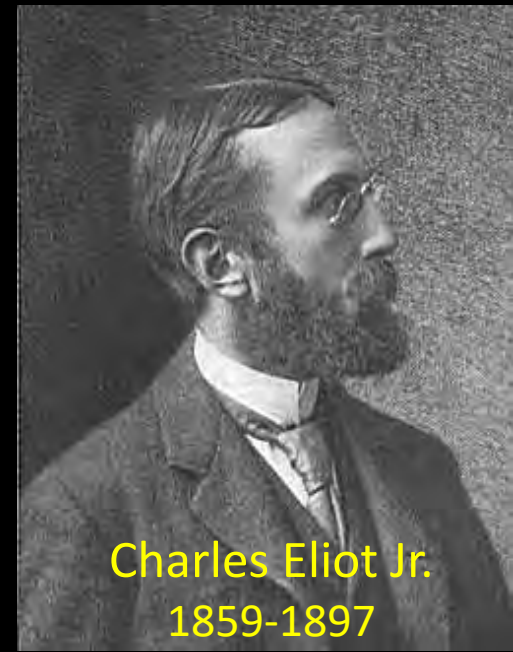


Narrative of Redemptive Urban Nature

“Should the forces which push men into the arms of ignorance, sin, and death, be allowed a free field in our cities or should there be parks and open spaces *to redeem the city* with all that mingling of the natural and the human which we call landscape?”

Metropolitan Park System of Greater Boston

First Regional Park System – First Land Trust



Charles Eliot Jr.
1859-1897



Redeeming the City with Nature continues today...Wild and Pastoral

21st Century Officially Sanctioned Urban Nature “Imported at Any Price”

What it is and Where it is

In America, we celebrate urban nature that is either deliberately cultivated pastoral greenspace like *parks, gardens, and urban farms* or formally protected as remnants of the wild native landscapes obliterated by the creation of the city in *preserves, sanctuaries, refuges, and other “wildlands”*.



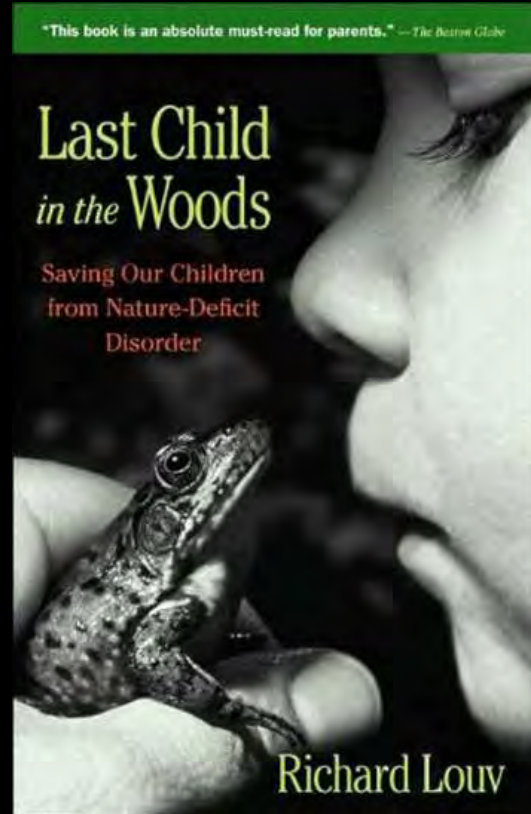
21st Century Narrative of Redemptive Urban Nature

What it means and does

The Wild and The Pastoral Imported - Presuppositions

- **The framework of iterative natures** - wildlands, preserves, parks, and gardens established for imaginative urban landscapes of wild first nature and pastoral second nature.
- **Degradation and Redemption** - Urban industrial second nature is degradation in need of redemption.
- **Transcendentalist concept of nature** - a tonic for body and spirit which is deliberately incorporated into urban design.

Nature Deficit Disorder - Space for nature is essential - to provide recreation for physical health and for mental health – children must know nature to be proper humans



Import it at any price...

Narrative of Restorative Urban Nature

Versions 1 and 2

Urban
Ecological
Design/Planning

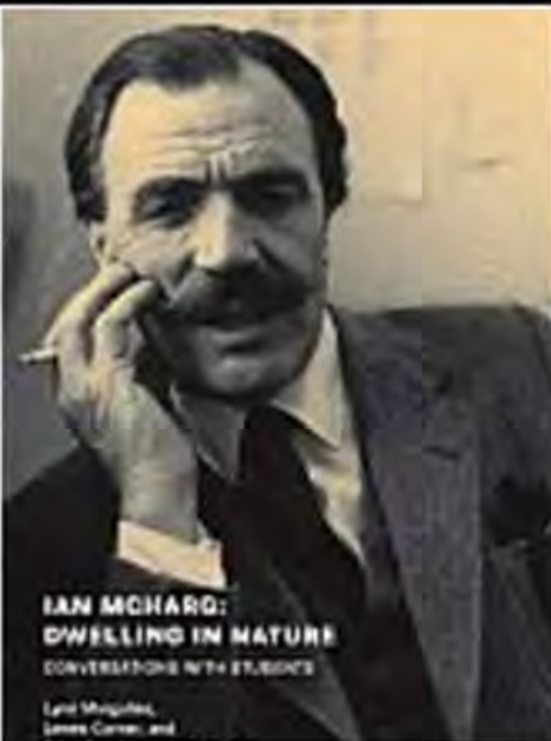


Urban
Restoration
Ecology



Version 1 - Narrative of Restorative Urban Nature – *Design with Nature*

- Ian McHarg (1920-2001)
- McHarg presupposes that “the city is a pathological environment” which can be restored to ecological sustainability through design and planning.
- Humans are the problem
- Ecology – Nature in the city - is the solution
- *Design with Nature*
 - prioritized incorporating nature throughout the urban landscape
 - promoted “landscape architecture as the instrument of environmentalism.”



We are the bullies of the earth: strong, foul, coarse, greedy, careless, indifferent to others, laying waste as we proceed, leaving wounds, welts, lesions, suppurations on the earth body, increasingly engulfed by our own ordure and, finally, abysmally ignorant of the way the world works, crowing our superiority over all life.

— Ian McHarg —

AZ QUOTES



Version 1 - Architecture and Urban Design

- Presuppositions – Cooperation with nature and improvement of nature.
- Presupposition – Urban industrial second nature is degradation which can be restored to ecological sustainability through design and planning.
- Presupposition – “Ecological design/planning” can make development “sustainable”
- Presupposition – **Science is the principal authority for landscape design**



A 'Design with Nature' approach to community design means...

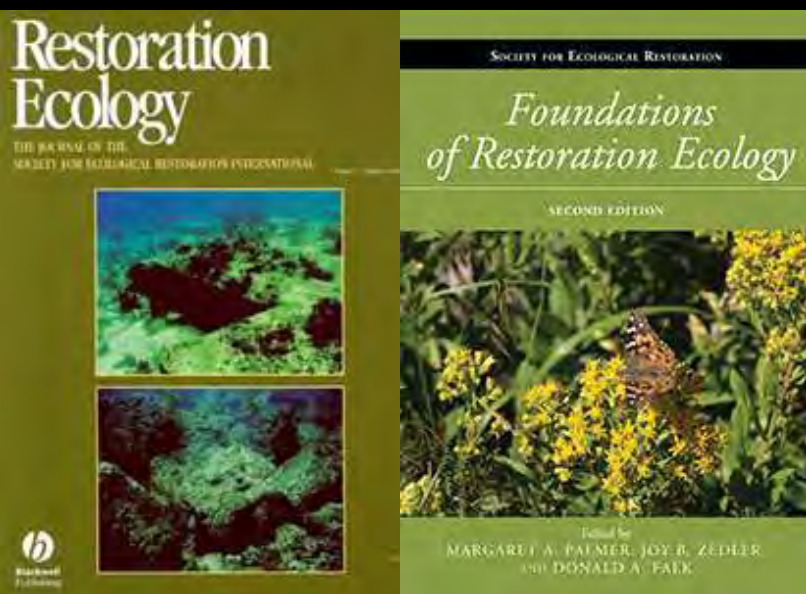


- Develop compact, complete communities
- Increase transportation options
- Reduce the loads on water, waste and energy systems
- Protect and restore urban 'green' space
- Strive for a lighter 'hydrologic footprint'
- Achieve higher levels of stream, wetland and lake protection

Narrative of Restorative Urban Nature

Version 2 – Science – Restoration Ecology and Conservation Biology

- Restoration ecology developed alongside conservation biology with the goal of **not just to conserve remnant historical habitats and species but to actively restore “native” ecosystems.**
- **Urban Restoration Ecology** - Emerged in the 1980s focused on the recovery of “native historical habitats” through the restoration of them in urban landscapes.
- Presupposition - Good (Urban) Nature = Native Historical Habitats



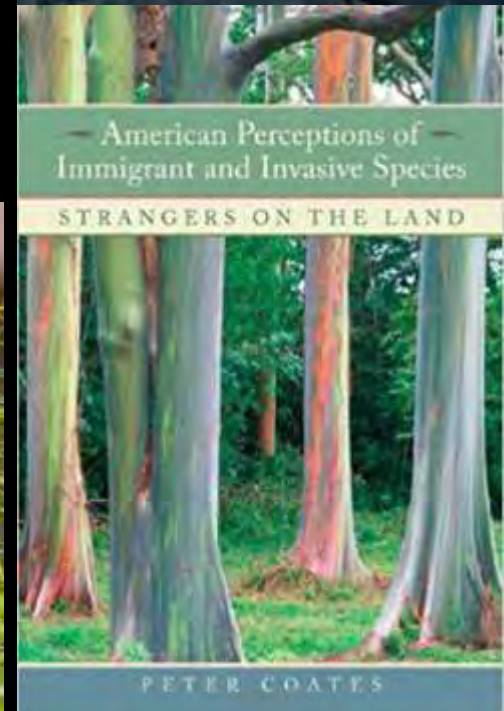
Narrative of War – Invasive Species

Transgressive weeds = non-native species – they must be eradicated because they are disruptive aliens. The most controversial of these aliens are called “invasive species”.

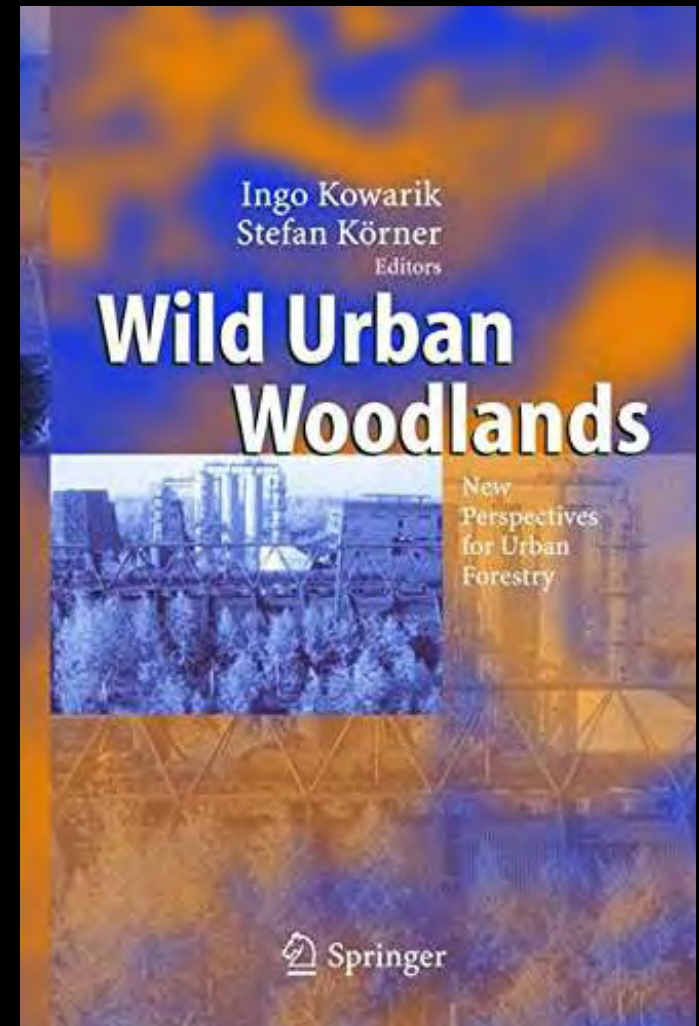
Trash Animals: How We Live with Nature’s Filthy, Feral, Invasive, and Unwanted Species (2013)

Invaders of Texas
a Citizen Science Program
to Detect and Report Invasive Species

Restorative Urban Nature = Native Species



21st Century Ecology and the City
The Problem of Scientific Knowledge and Urban Nature
Retrospective Ecology vs. Prospective Ecology



Retrospective Ecology, Historical Naturalness

American Urban Ecology

Good Nature vs. Bad Nature Native vs. Nonnative



The Mannahatta Project began in 1999, when landscape ecologist Dr. Eric Sanderson moved to New York City to work for the Wildlife Conservation Society....

“to fully appreciate the concrete landscape of streets and buildings that was his new home, he would have to ‘go back in time’ to recreate the its ecology from the ‘ground up’...

Going back to 1609 allows us to see what New York City was before it was a city and to reimagine the city’s development in a way that would incorporate more of the natural cycles and processes (such as the hydrological cycle) ***that made the island the ecological gem that it was.***”

Retrospective Ecology vs. Prospective Ecology

Retrospective Naturalness - Native Historical Habitats

- “The point of reference is therefore, **pristine vegetation uninfluenced by humans**. Based on the cultural history of the relevant area, **the reference period may lie decades or a few millennia in the past.**”
- “remnants of pristine woodlands are **most natural.**”
- “the development back to nearly natural or **natural woodlands composed of historical native species can be analyzed well.**”

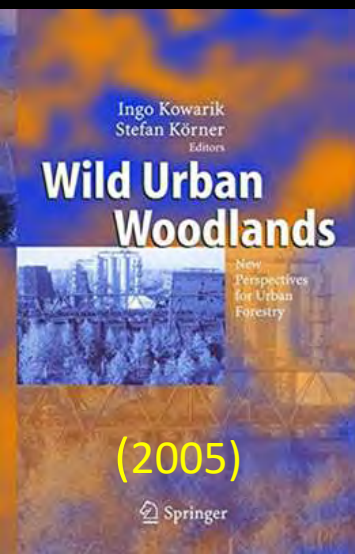


The Problem of Wild Urban Woodlands

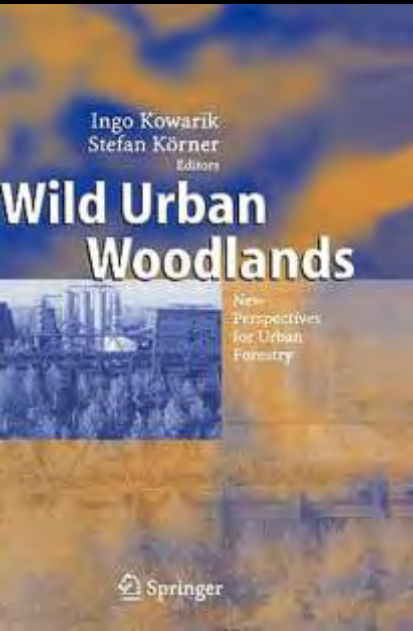
“With the evaluation of **new development of ‘wild’ urban woodlands**, however, the traditional concept of naturalness oriented toward **historical comparisons runs aground.**”

New/Novel Wild Urban Woodlands cannot be “analyzed well”

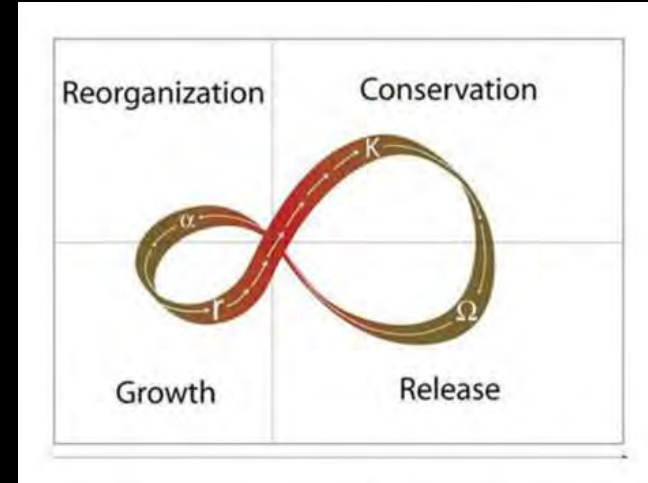
Prospective naturalness? Permanence and Change



The Problem of Wild Urban Woodlands – Waller Creek 7th Steet Bridge



2024



2005



2009



2012



2017

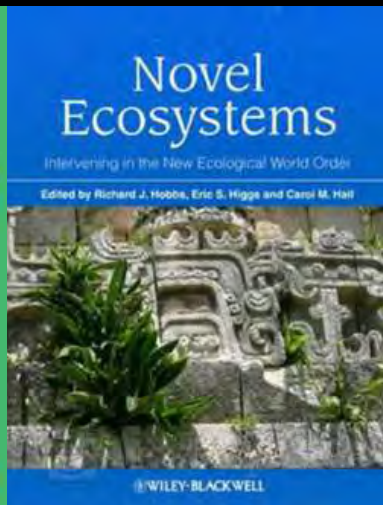
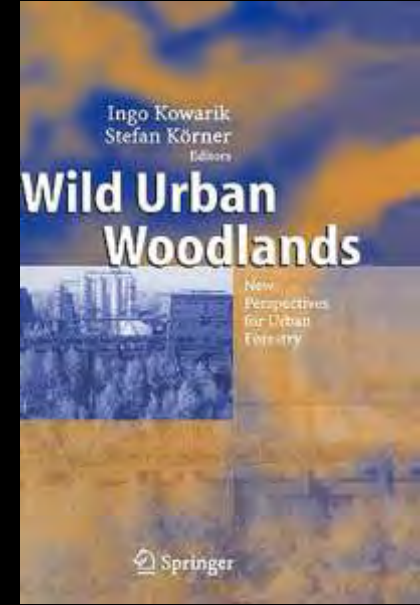
Narrative of Functional Urban Nature - Urban Ecology

The New Ecology – Prospective Naturalness

Permanence and Change = Process

“the reference point is not an original condition of a natural landscape, but rather a condition defined based on the current site potential and the greatest possible degree of self-regulation.

From this perspective, therefore, the natural capacity for *process* is the central point, not a particular, retrospectively determined and often idealized, *picture of nature.*” - Kowarik

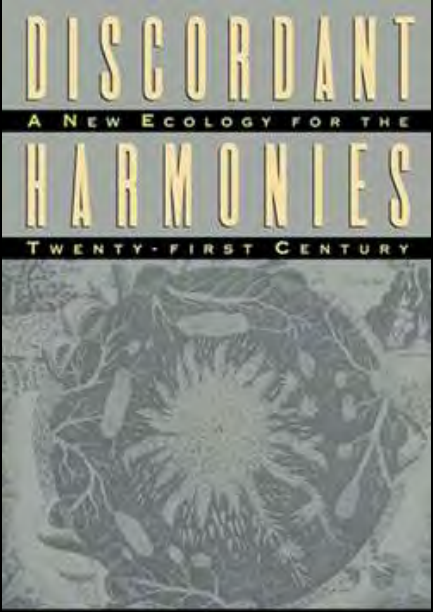


New Metaphors of Permanence and Change

“Clearly, to abandon a belief in the constancy of undisturbed nature is psychologically uncomfortable...

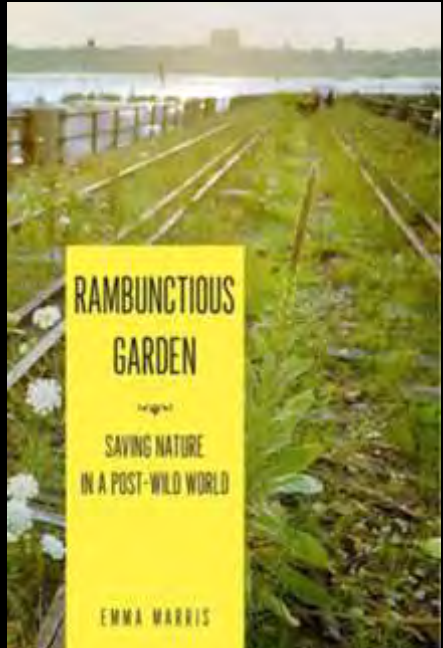
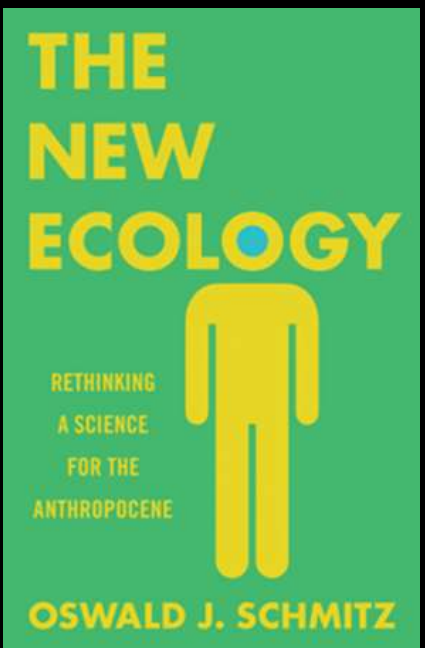
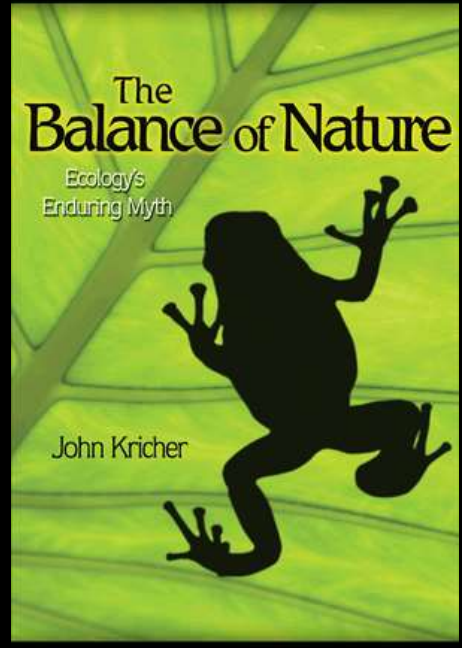
The way to achieve a harmony with nature is first **to break free of old metaphors and embrace new ones** so that we can lift the veils that prevent us from accepting what we observe, and then to make use of technology to study life and life-support systems as they are.”

Botkin, *Discordant Harmonies*



DANIEL B. BOTKIN

1990



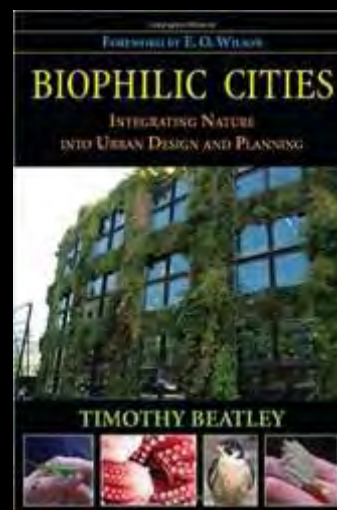
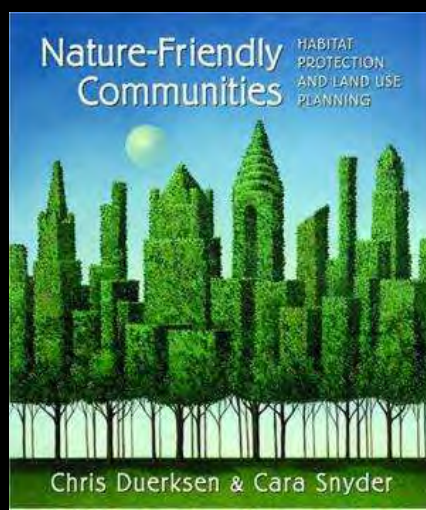
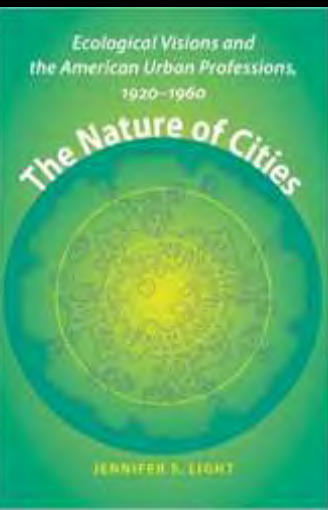
New Narrative of Urban Nature and the Ecological City?

Redemptive? Restorative? Other?
Urban Design, Management, and Science

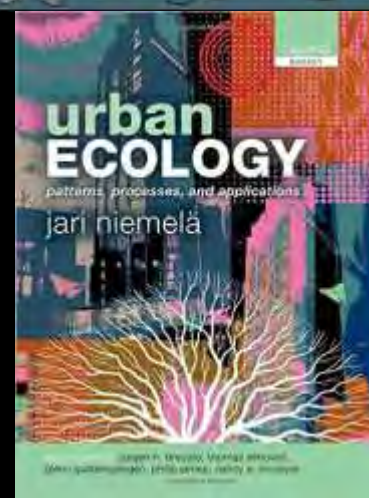
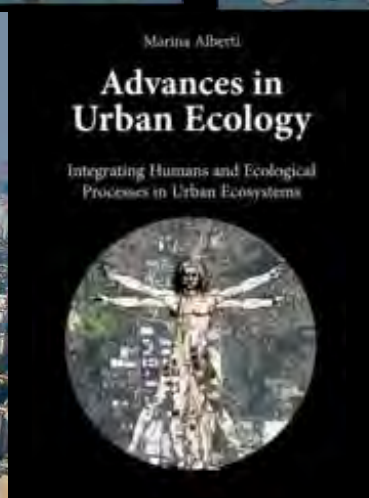
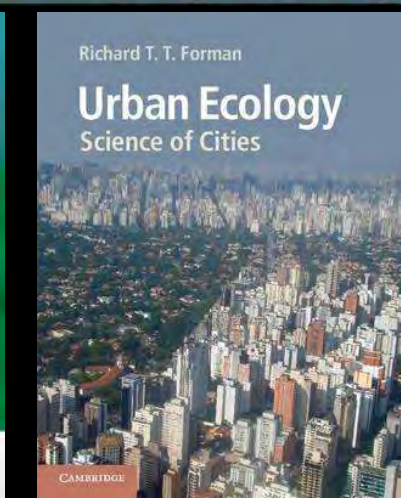
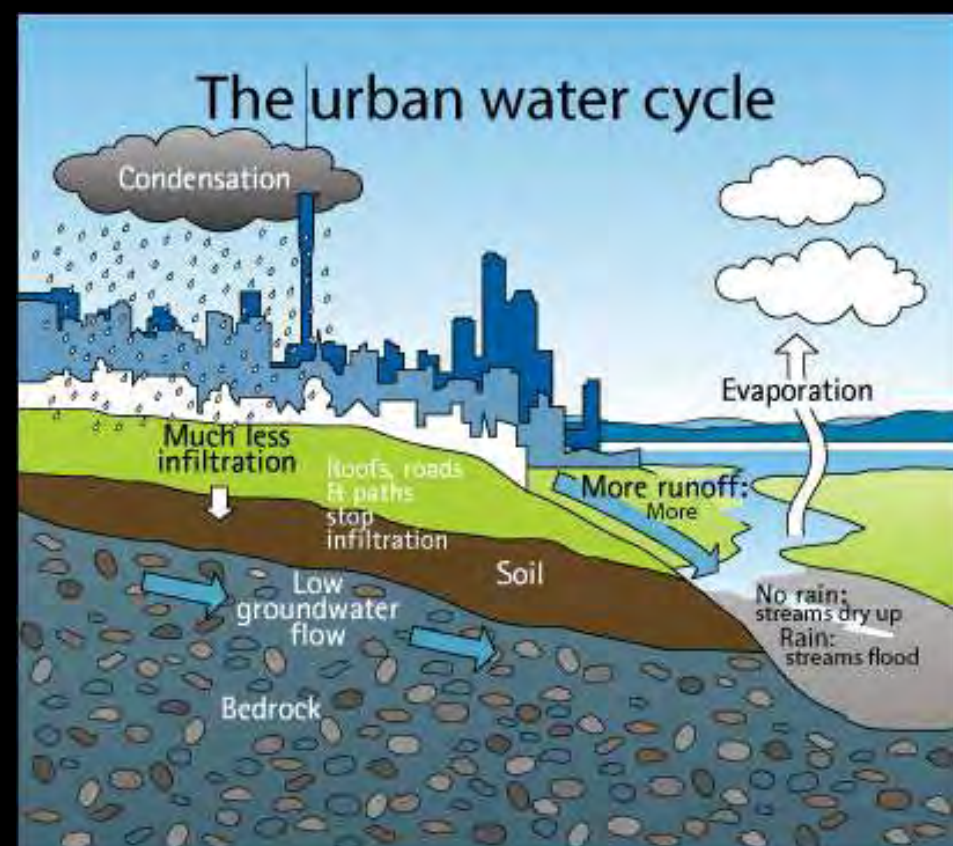
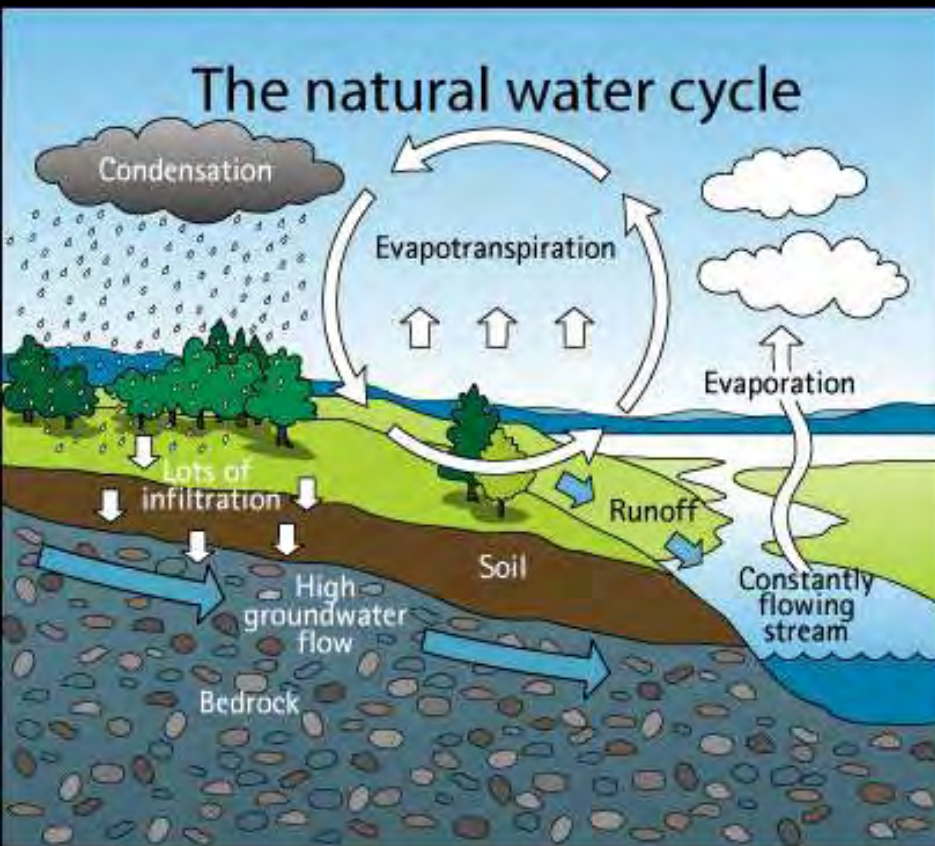
The Nature of Cities is a “boundary organization” interested in ideas at the frontiers of science, design, policy, and the arts — an idea hive that puts different approaches and points of view together, to discover what novel perspectives might emerge.

a virtual magazine and discussion site

<https://www.thenatureofcities.com/>



Narrative of Functional Urban Nature - Urban Ecology



21st Century Narrative of Functional Nature - Urban Ecology

Science and Environmental Management

Cities as part of Nature - Cities as Ecosystems

Ecosystem Processes and Cycles - Flows and Relationships - Nonlinearity

the natural capacity for *process* is the central point, not a particular, retrospectively determined and often idealized, *picture* of nature

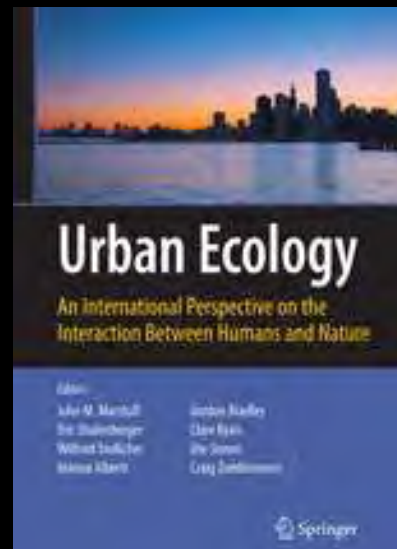
- Science - The study of urban ecosystem functionality
- Management - The restoration of urban ecosystem functionality



Martina Alberti
**Advances in
Urban Ecology**
Integrating Humans and Ecological
Processes in Urban Ecosystems



Richard T. T. Forman
Urban Ecology
Science of Cities



Narrative of Functional Urban Nature - *The Idea of Urban Metabolism*

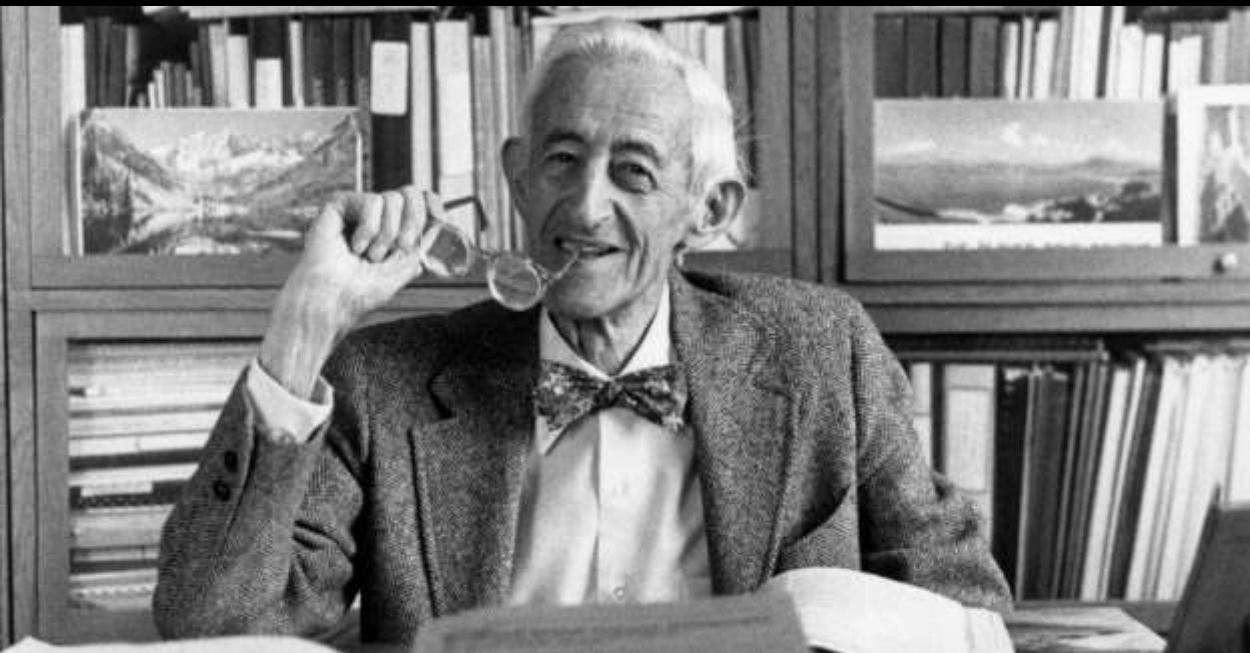
Engineering and Environmental Management - Cities as Material Systems

Process and Functionality – Inputs and Outputs – Linearity

“The metabolic requirements of a city can be defined as the materials and commodities needed to sustain the city’s inhabitants at home, at work and at play...The *metabolic cycle* is not completed until wastes and residues of daily life have been removed and disposed of with a minimum of nuisance and hazard.”

- Abel Wolman (1892 – 1989) “The metabolism of cities” *Science* (1965)

Urban Sustainability = Equilibrium = Homeostasis

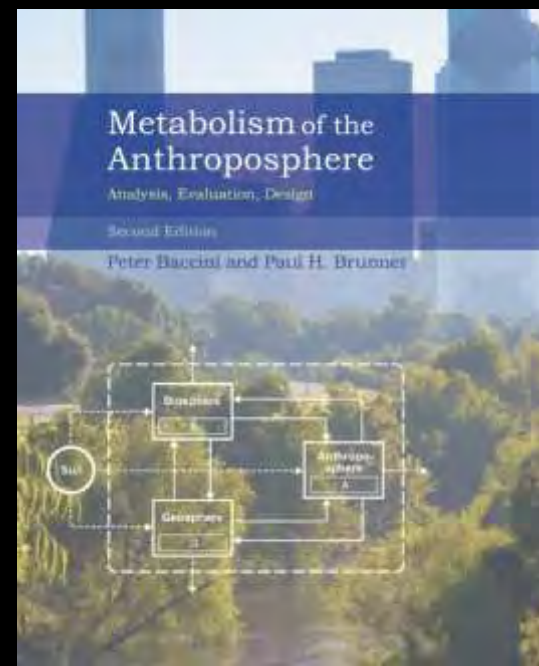
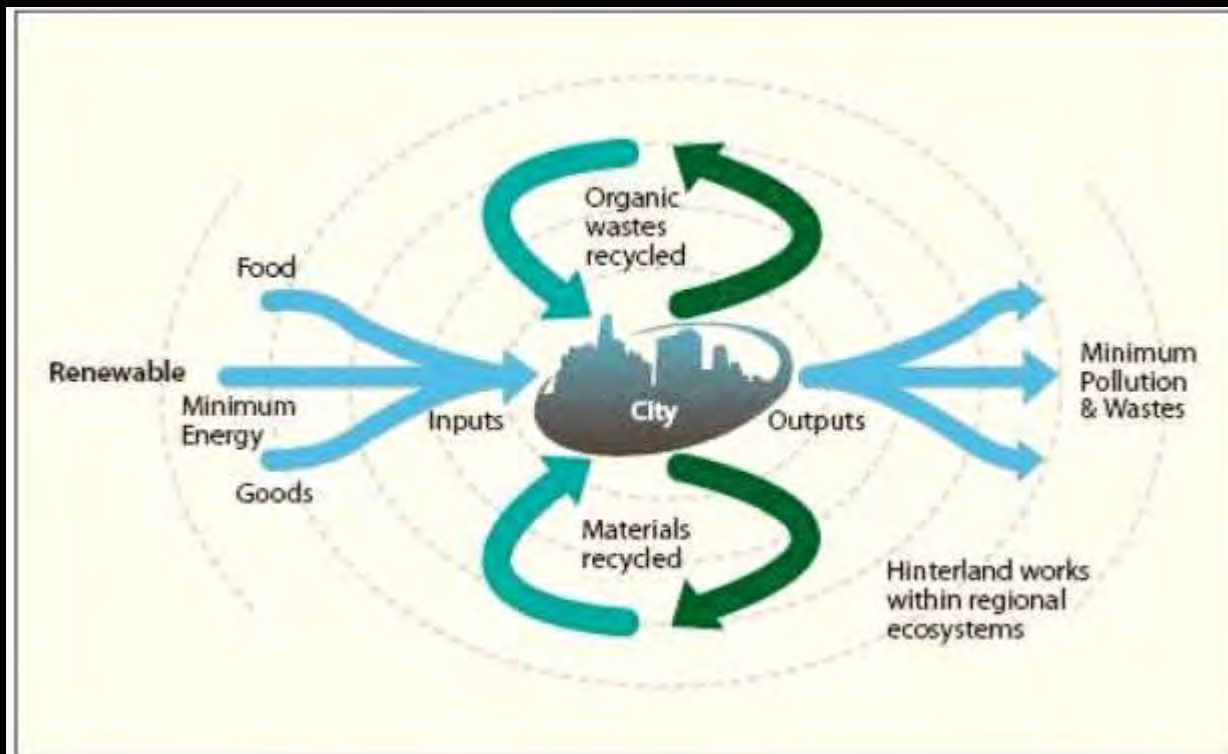
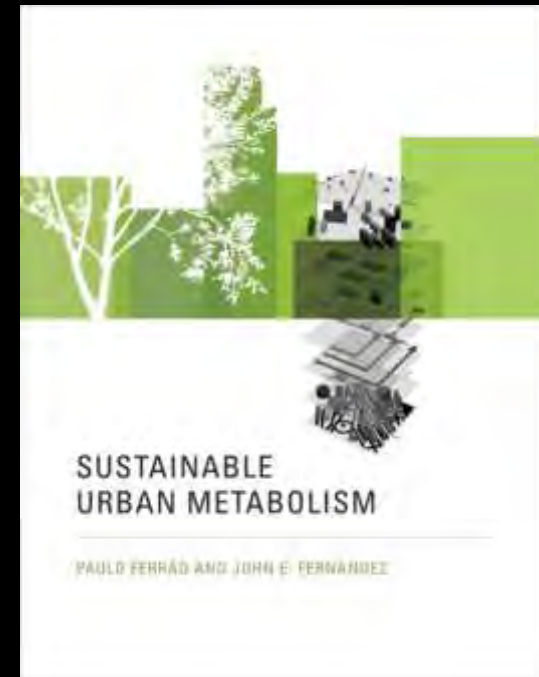


Urban Metabolism – The Earth as an “urban system”

Environmental Engineering - Process and Functionality

This global network of urban systems, including ecosystems, is the anthroposphere; the physical flows and stocks of matter and energy within it form its metabolism.

The characterization of these flows and the relationships between anthropogenic urban activities and natural processes and cycles defines the urban metabolism.



Cities as Socioecological - Urban Political Ecology

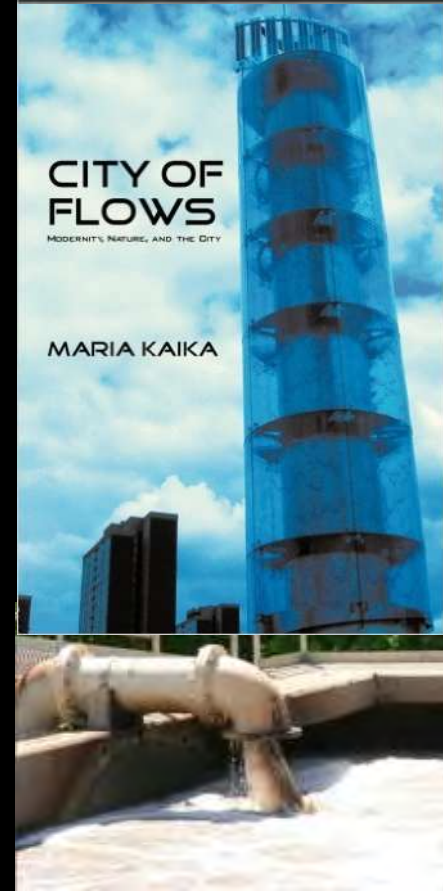
Urban Metabolism + Society + Politics

“The central message that emerges from urban political ecology is a decidedly political one. To the extent that ***cities are produced through socioecological processes***, attention has been paid to the political processes through which particular socio-environmental urban conditions are made and remade.”

-Nik Heynen, et. al. (2006) *In the Nature of Cities*

“Cities are ***dense networks of interwoven socio-spatial processes that are simultaneously human, material, natural, discursive, cultural, and organic***. The myriad of transformation and metabolisms that support and maintain urban life, such as water, food, computers, or movies always combine environmental *and* social processes as infinitely interconnected...this intermingling of things material and symbolic combines to produce a particular socio-environmental *milieu* that welds nature, society and the city together in ***a deeply heterogeneous, conflicting and often disturbing whole***.”

-Maria Kaika (2005) *City of Flows: Modernity, Nature, and the City*



What is a City?

Cities as part of Nature - Cities as Ecosystems

Ecology 'in' the city vs Ecology 'of' cities



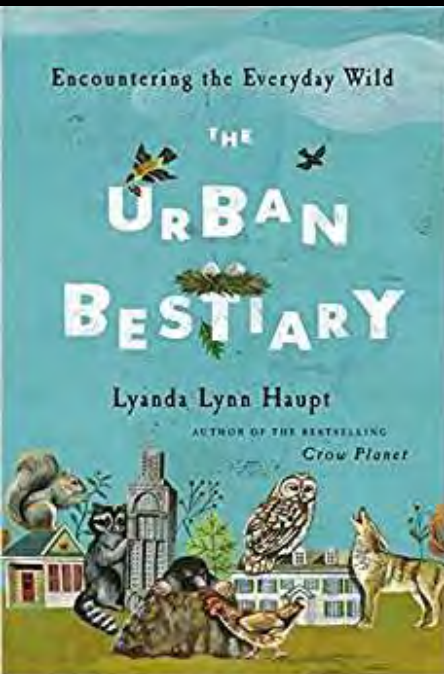
Cities as Socioecological

The Nonhuman Narrative of Urban Nature

“Maybe it’s not really nature at all, not a real ecosystem, just a bunch of weeds and exotics mixed up with human junk”

The Non-Human Urbanites

- Who are they?
- Where are they?
- What do they do?
- What do they mean?



Urban Wildness and the Agency of Nature

- Agents - Nonhumans are active subjects using the urban landscape rather than passive objects for human appreciation and use.
- Agency - Non-humans do unexpected things and defy our expectations of how non-humans should behave and where they should live (their proper place)...



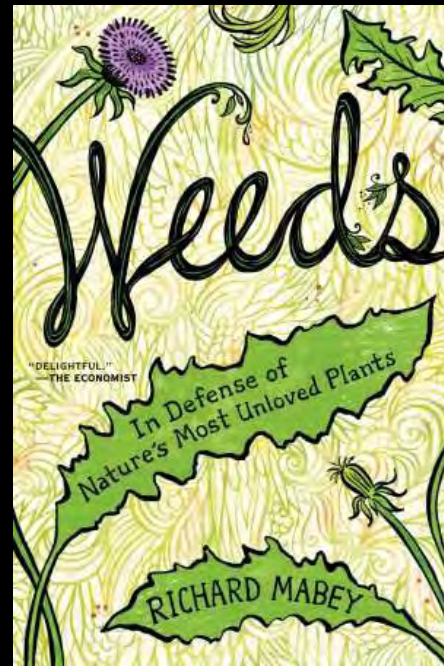
Agency of Nature – Flora

...and where they should thrive.

Beautiful flower in your garden
But the most beautiful by far
Is the one growing wild in the garbage dump
Even here, even here, we are

Song by Paul Westerberg, “Even Here We Are” (14 Songs, 1993)

“I like it when a flower or a little tuft of grass grows through a crack in the concrete.
It's so ... heroic.” - George Carlin



Urban Fauna - The Challenge of Urban Wildlife

Urban fauna is judged **favorably** when it in some way **fulfills our expectations of wild or pastoral nature**. And so, nesting red-tailed hawks and peregrine falcons are redemptive wild additions to the city.



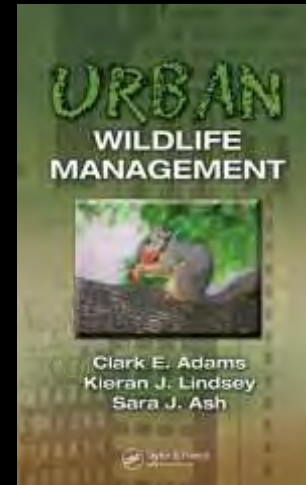
Welcome to the Live Falcon Cam! The University of Texas Tower is home to a female Peregrine Falcon, nicknamed "Tower Girl."



Urban Fauna - The Challenge of Urban Wildlife

However, urban fauna is **condemned as pestilent** when it fails to follow the narrative for good fauna in the city or ***stay in the proper places for nature in the city.***

This narrative of urban wildlife declares that transgressive coyotes, rats, grackles, and pigeons are ***urban pests that further degrade the city...***



Proper Place for Urban Wildlife? **All of the City is Habitat**

The mobility of urban wildlife allows them to exploit the entire city as habitat and ignore human boundaries for proper urban nature.



What does the City mean to Pale Male? The Lifeworld

Pale Male the famous red-tailed hawk
Performs wing stands high above midtown Manhattan
Circles around for one last pass over the park
Got his eye on a fat squirrel down there and a couple of pigeons
They got no place to run they got no place to hide
But Pale Male he's cool, see 'cause his breakfast ain't goin' nowhere
So he does a loop the loop for the tourists and the six o'clock news
Got him a penthouse view from the tip-top of the food chain, boys
He looks up and down on Fifth Avenue and says "God I love this town"

But life goes on down here below
And all us mortals struggle so
We laugh and cry
And live and die
That's how it goes
For all we know
Down here below

"Down Here Below"
Steve Earle
Washington Square Serenade
2007



Urban Nature Out of Place - Improper Urban Nature

Dr. Anderson's Research

Nature flourishes through its own agency in neglected urban spaces and margins like overgrown urban creeks, vacant lots, garbage dumps, sewage ponds, unmaintained roadway and railway verges, derelict industrial tracts, abandoned buildings, crumbling walls, and other urban waste spaces.



The Geography of Urban Wastelands

Wastelands - whole patches

- Vacant lots
- Dumpsites
- Industrial Wasteland
 - Brownfields
 - Greenfields
 - Quarries and Gravel Pits
- Urban Infrastructure Land
 - Power plants
 - Water treatment plants
 - Reservoirs
 - Wastewater treatment plants
 - Sewage ponds
 - Constructed wetlands
 - Stormwater retention structures
- Unusable Land - bits and pieces
 - Slopes, gullies, corners, fragments

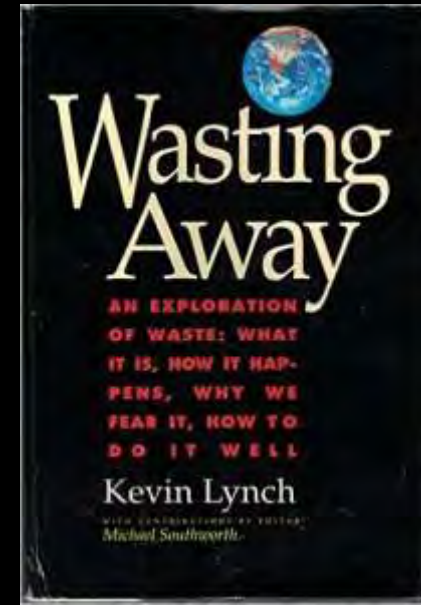
Margins – edges and ledges

- Urban waterways
- Canals, drainage channels
- Utility corridors
- Waysides
 - road waysides
 - railway verges
- Alleys – paved, unpaved, grass
- Walkways and pathways
- Fencelines
- Walls and ledges
- Pillars and bridge abutments



The Proper Place of Humans? Ruinous Attractions

“Many waste places have these ruinous attractions: release from control, free play for action and fantasy, rich and varied sensations. Thus children are attracted to vacant lots, scrub woods, back alleys, and unused hillsides...those screened, marginal, uncontrolled places where people can indulge in behavior that is proscribed and yet not harmful to others – are regularly threatened by clean-ups and yet are a **necessity for supple society.**” Kevin Lynch





© Sonja Sommerfeld / TPWD





Literary Responses - Urban Nature Writing

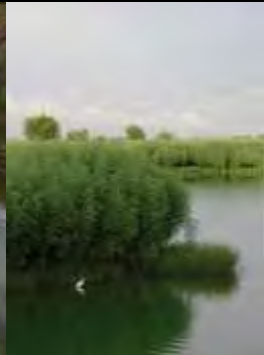
The Unofficial Countryside Richard Mabey (1973)

“I have called it *the unofficial countryside* because none of these places is in the countryside proper, nor were they ever intended to provide bed and board for wildlife.

They are all habitats which have grown out of human need. This is a scrappy definition, I know, covering everything from a planned suburban playground to the accidentally green corner of a city-centre parking lot.

Yet I think all these places do have one quality in common, and that is that, in them, the labels ‘urban’ and ‘rural’ by which we normally find our bearings in a landscape, just do not apply.

It is not the parks but the railway sidings that are thick with wild flowers.”



American Urban/Suburban Nature Writing

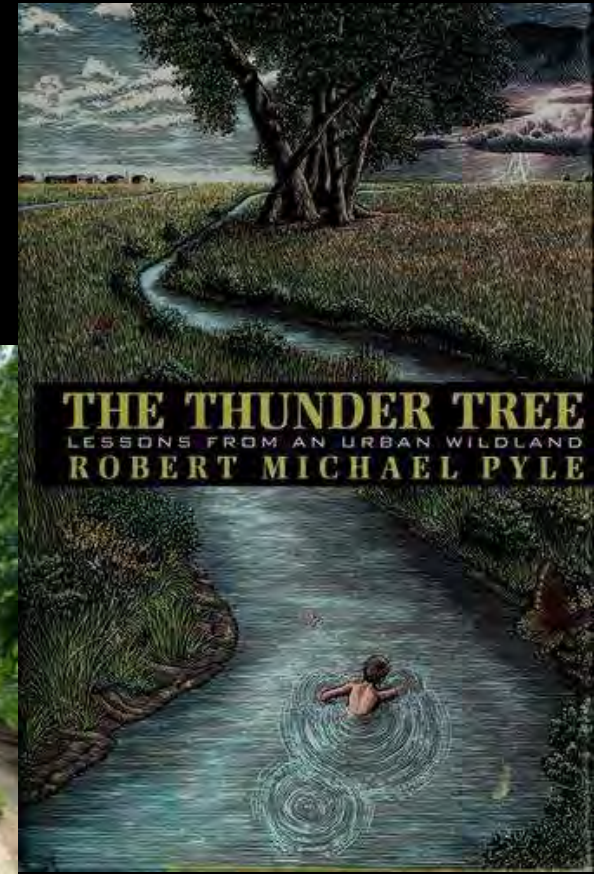
What do shreds and scraps of the natural scene mean, after all, in the shadow of the citified whole?

What can one patch of leftover land mean to one person's life, or to the lives of all who dwell in the postindustrial wasteland?

Robert Michael Pyle, *The Thunder Tree: Lessons from an Urban Wildland* (1993)



Accidental Wilds



Urban Wasteland Poetry

This is the landscape that nobody wants. It's my cup of rejection:
Driven to this unformed scraggly ignored backlot, this not-quite
Prairie, not-quite thicket, not even natural corner of
Texas, the hardscrabble left butt of a demoralized nation,
It is my choice and my pleasure to cherish this haphazard wilderness.
No, it's not even "wild" – it's a neglected product of artifice.
Come, let us walk by an improvised lakeshore, be given a vision:
Beaches of black dust, beautiful white ghosts, this drowned forest...
- Frederick Turner, first stanza "Texas Eclogue" in *Hadean Eclogues* (1999)

Hadean Eclogues



Poems by Frederick Turner



The Narrative of Marginal Nature

“Maybe it’s not really nature at all, not a real ecosystem, just a bunch of weeds and exotics mixed up with human junk.”

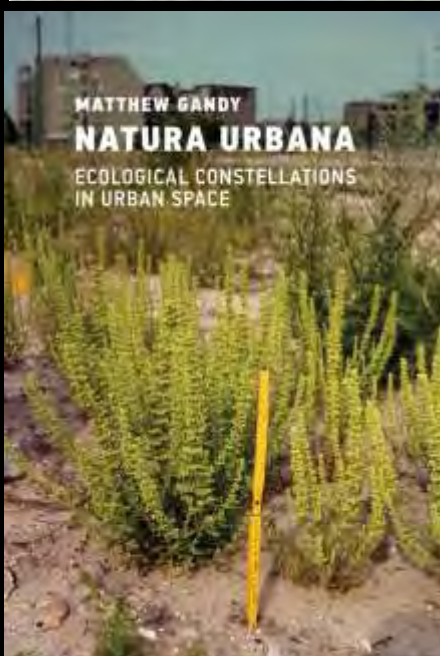
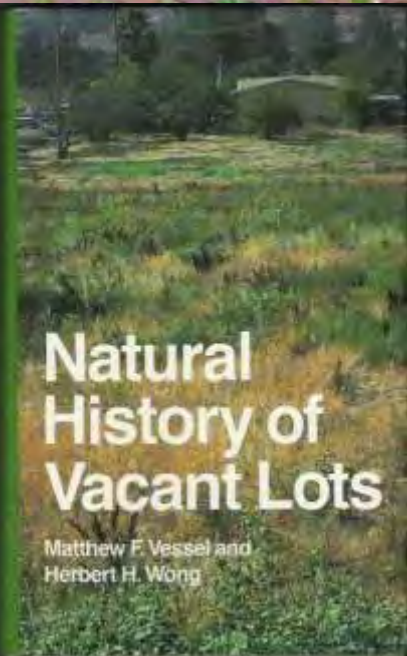
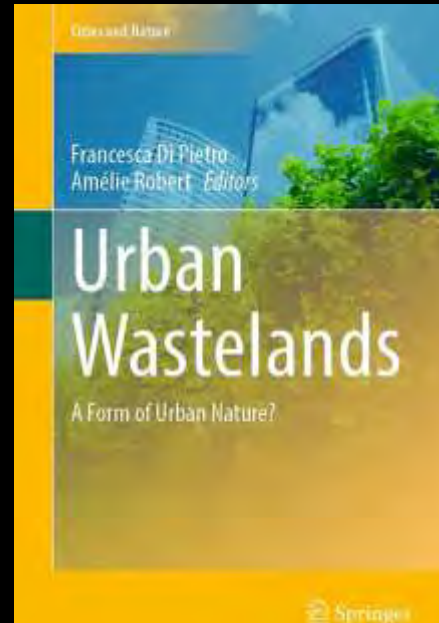
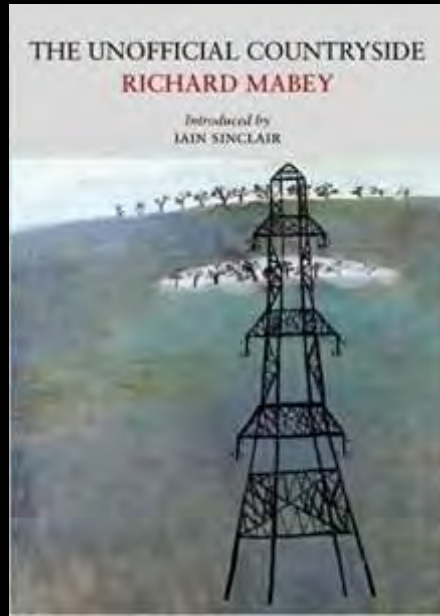
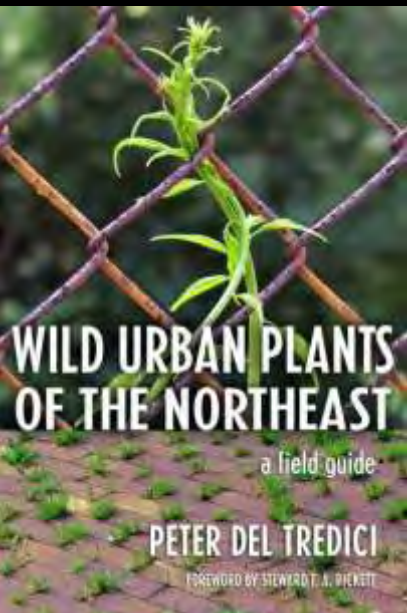
What emerges in these urban wastelands is a hybrid type of nature both weedy and wild - the unintended product of human activity and Nature's unflinching opportunism, which I call **Marginal Nature**

Marginal Nature: Urban Wastelands and the Geography of Nature

Anderson 2009 UT Geography



Marginal nature in the urban landscape is neither pristine nor pastoral, but rather it is a new kind of nature whose ecological and cultural meaning is an open question.





The Urban Lifeworld - The Socioecological City
A coproduction of humans and nonhumans

Natural What?

