Book Review: *Borders of Biodiversity: How Gray Wolves, Monarch Butterflies, and Giant Sequoias Transformed Large Landscape Conservation*

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Borders of Biodiversity: How Gray Wolves, Monarch Butterflies, and Giant Sequoias Transformed Large Landscape Conservation, by Will Wright. The University of North Carolina Press, 2026, x + 335 pages.

Reviewed by Evan Lott, University of Kansas

Will Wright's *Borders of Biodiversity* is a meandering and captivating treatise that draws together the histories of the human and more-than-human across North America, largely from the mid-19th century through the present, that defy the borders, boundaries, and logics of nation-states. As Wright illustrates the historical narratives of each of the charismatic species that make up the more-than-human historical actors in his monograph, gray wolves, monarch butterflies, and giant sequoias (the Big Trees), he aims to trace "the origins of large landscape conservation" as a central component in "identifying alternative pathways to a more just, livable future" through the lessons these stories tell about the conservation of biodiversity (3). Each episode represents what Wright coins as "ecological internationalism," which he defines in two ways: as a historical process that forged "solidarity across borders" through the work of scientists and conservationists in the face of species-level extinctions (3), and as an urgent political reconciliation between "state-imposed borders" and "biocentric ones" that "recognized that biota have their own forms of territoriality . . . that should be respected and protected" (15). Both of these definitions offer a prescient lens through which Wright invites readers to view our present historical moment, "an age of climate dislocation," as he traces their historical trajectory (250).

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Throughout his three-part work, Wright uncovers the scientific, ecological, and political innovations that humans forged in their efforts to conserve these species in each section. Beginning with the conservation of gray wolves, he argues that their protection necessitated binational cooperation between Canada and the United States after nearly a century of state-sponsored bounties and eradication programs almost wiped them out. Scientists ultimately employed the emergent science of corridor ecology to protect gray wolves along the Yellowstone to Yukon (Y2Y) corridor by the latter decades of the 20th century. Next, the conservation of monarch butterflies included a trinational mélange of Canadian, American, and Mexican humans who pursued chemical ecology and citizen science initiatives to understand their relationship to the environment (particularly milkweed) and to unravel the mystery of monarch migration patterns. Monarch conservation fostered cooperation between grassroots conservancies and the international collaboration and funding between governments that facilitated their work. Finally, Wright argues that the Big Trees represent a subnational/supranational story of large land conservation that involved political, scientific, and cultural interactions between the United States and Indigenous nations in California by the end of the 20th century. Failure to recognize Indigenous land tenure in the state first led to extractive logging, quickly followed by decades of total fire suppression on public lands enforced by federal agencies. The development of dendrochronology in the early decades of the 20th century eventually led scientists to understand by the 1970s what Indigenous nations had known since time immemorial: Healthy forest ecosystems relied on regular burning. In the end, each of these case studies represents episodes in large landscape biological conservation.

For scholars of animal, environmental, political, and/or borderlands history, Wright's "ecological internationalism" framework offers a multifaceted theoretical tool. Engaging with the historical interactions between human and more-than-human life to showcase the deeply entangled processes and places that such relationships have created, as Wright does here, encourages the very inter- and transdisciplinary methodologies that ground Animal History. *Borders of Biodiversity* is a fine addition to the field's historiography and will appeal to a wide range of readers. Well-selected photographs, maps, and oral interviews that Wright includes enliven his narrative with fine visual context and firsthand evidence to support the claims he makes. Undergraduate and graduate students, and the public, will appreciate Wright's storytelling acumen. ■

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