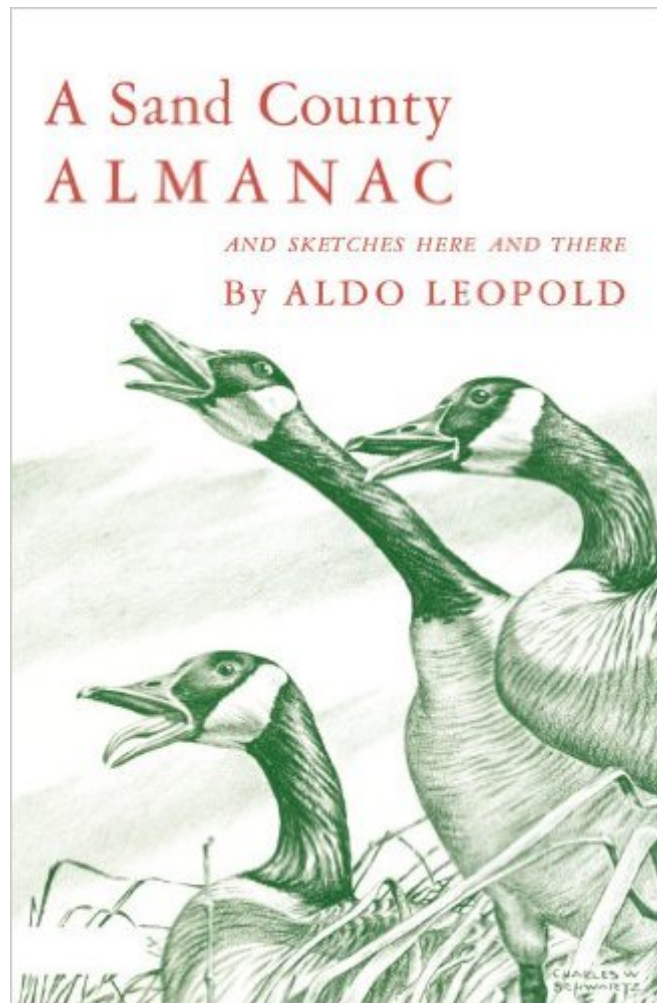


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# A Sand County Almanac And Sketches Here And There



## Synopsis

First published in 1949 and praised in The New York Times Book Review as "a trenchant book, full of vigor and bite," A Sand County Almanac combines some of the finest nature writing since Thoreau with an outspoken and highly ethical regard for America's relationship to the land. Written with an unparalleled understanding of the ways of nature, the book includes a section on the monthly changes of the Wisconsin countryside; another part that gathers informal pieces written by Leopold over a forty-year period as he traveled through the woodlands of Wisconsin, Iowa, Arizona, Sonora, Oregon, Manitoba, and elsewhere; and a final section in which Leopold addresses the philosophical issues involved in wildlife conservation. As the forerunner of such important books as Annie Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, Edward Abbey's *Desert Solitaire*, and Robert Finch's *The Primal Place*, this classic work remains as relevant today as it was forty years ago.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I would give the actual ORIGINAL version of the text a 5 star rating, and indeed do so for the Oxford University Press edition. That version is slightly more expensive in Paperback, but has a better introduction and, more importantly, is actually printed as originally written by Leopold. The Ballantine version has been censored by the publisher to remove several sentences which either explicitly use the word "evolution" or which imply it. Granted, these are only a few sentences out of the entire book. But it makes this work something other than the work which is seminal in the field of environmental philosophy and naturalism, and such censorship is intrinsically objectionable-note also that the publisher nowhere in this book tells you that such alterations have been made nor is

this version described as an abridged or edited version. Further, this change makes this version unacceptable for use in teaching science courses where censorship because of ideology or market share is beyond the pale. If you find any hint of evolution to be distracting (for one reason or another) from the fine naturalistic writing in which Leopold engages (evolution is not central to his argument or description), or are too cash-strapped to shell out an extra few bucks for the OUP edition or something at your local used book store or don't have the time to go to the library, by all means purchase this version. It is similar in most ways to Leopold's written work. But this is not to be mistaken for that work in its entirety.

This is a profoundly insightful and important book that ranks among the most significant American books of the Twentieth Century. It would be a mistake to describe this book as "nature writing" per se, or of that genre. It is a series of essays in wonderful prose in which nature, outdoor settings or situations provide the backdrop. But it is not written as a naturalist droning about the wonders of some aspect of nature. It is an inspired and deeply insightful description, by a man who clearly has a deep understanding of how nature works, about the ethical dimensions of our relationship with the land and our environment generally. Despite the simple elegance of the writing style, it can be seen (and I know from biographical information) the author draws from a vast experience and knowledge far outside the confines of the wildlife management, which was his profession. The ideas expressed, and the many quotable passages are a treasure trove for anyone interested in broad ideas, not to mention readers whose professions involve recreation, wildlife, natural resources management, the environment, and the teaching of these disciplines as well as ethics, philosophy, and English literature. In sum, this is a must read for virtually anyone who wishes to be familiar with important American literature, as well as those with a particular interest in the environment, environmental ethics and philosophy.

I recently had lunch with Stan Temple, a senior fellow at the Aldo Leopold foundation. He told me that this edition is not true to original text Leopold used. Apparently the type setter or copy editor was an ardent creationist and excised all references to evolution in this edition. It seemed hard to believe to me, but I confirmed it. For example, in "Marshland Elegy" Leopold writes, "The other members of the fauna in which he originated are long since entombed within the hills. When we hear his call we hear no mere bird. We hear the trumpet in the orchestra of evolution. He is the symbol of our untamable past, of that incredible sweep of millennia which underlies and conditions the daily affairs of birds and men." However in this edition, the sentence "We hear the trumpet in the

orchestra of evolution" is absent. Aldo Leopold is one of my personal heroes and Sand County Almanac is one of the finest pieces of environmental and philosophic writing. However, I'd suggest buying a different edition.

The Kindle edition is missing many chapters found in the MM paperback edition (Part III, A Taste For Country is almost entirely missing, and Part IV is combined with a small portion of what part III is in this edition). Since this is a text for class, and a good read besides, I am quite disappointed. Aldo Leopold and the book itself would get a 5 star rating. This edition however, leaves much to be desired.

The "Almanac" has been published several ways during the past fifty years, I strongly recommend the book published by Oxford University Press. It includes Thinking like a Mountain, The Land Ethic, and other important essays. From Leopold's Sketches: "Our ability to perceive quality in nature begins, as in art, with the pretty. It expands through successive stages of the beautiful to values as yet uncaptured by language." Scientist, educator, forester, philosopher, writer -- Aldo Leopold appears to many as something of an enigma. In his earlier writings, Leopold was a very different man than we find in this volume. In Leopold's own words: "I was young then, and full or trigger-itch." This insightful classic is a gentle, scholarly, fatherly collection of essays, observations and stories. Like Thoreau's Walden, it is revered, loved and widely imitated. Leopold: "Only the mountain has lived long enough to listen objectively to the howl of a wolf. ... The cowman who cleans his range of wolves does not realize that he is taking over the wolf's job of trimming the herd to fit the range. He has not learned to think like a mountain. Hence we have ... rivers washing the future into the sea."

This book is timeless. It includes many of Aldo Leopold's writings. Any one interested in conservation needs to read this book. He is quoted so often by people but I have never read his book. It is a good read and will stay on your reference shelf for many years to come. This is also the version that is still sold at Aldo Leopold center located on his farm near Baraboo, Wisconsin.

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