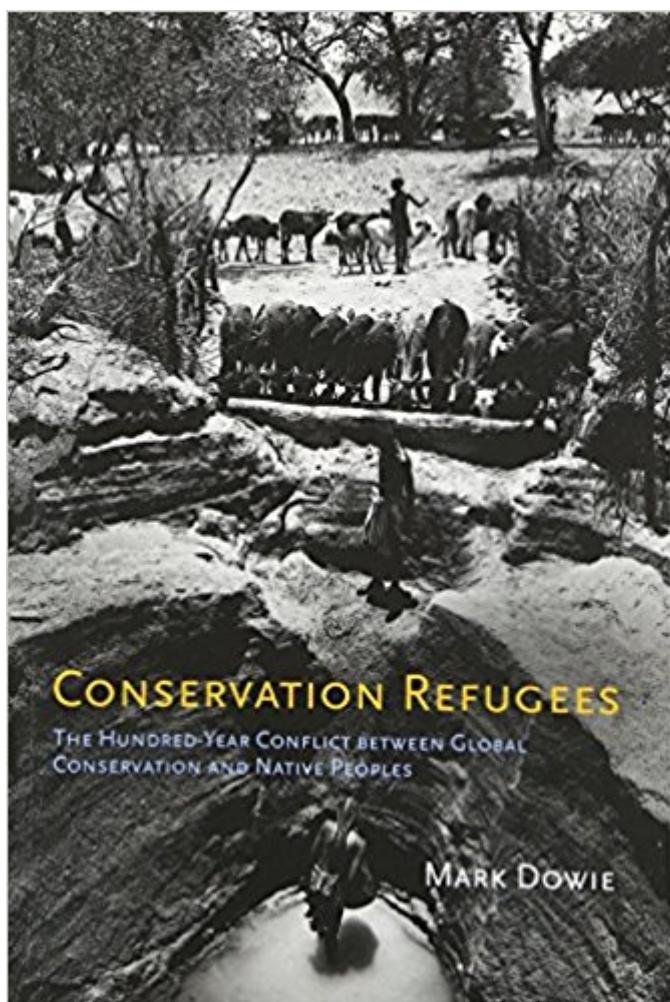


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# Conservation Refugees: The Hundred-Year Conflict Between Global Conservation And Native Peoples (MIT Press)



## Synopsis

Since 1900, more than 108,000 officially protected conservation areas have been established worldwide, largely at the urging of five international conservation organizations. About half of these areas were occupied or regularly used by indigenous peoples. Millions who had been living sustainably on their land for generations were displaced in the interests of conservation. In *Conservation Refugees*, Mark Dowie tells this story. This is a "good guy vs. good guy" story, Dowie writes; the indigenous peoples' movement and conservation organizations have a vital common goal--to protect biological diversity--and could work effectively and powerfully together to protect the planet and preserve biological diversity. Yet for more than a hundred years, these two forces have been at odds. The result: thousands of unmanageable protected areas and native peoples reduced to poaching and trespassing on their ancestral lands or "assimilated" but permanently indentured on the lowest rungs of the money economy. Dowie begins with the story of Yosemite National Park, which by the turn of the twentieth century established a template for bitter encounters between native peoples and conservation. He then describes the experiences of other groups, ranging from the Ogiek and Maasai of eastern Africa and the Pygmies of Central Africa to the Karen of Thailand and the Adeasis of India. He also discusses such issues as differing definitions of "nature" and "wilderness," the influence of the "BINGOs" (Big International NGOs, including the Worldwide Fund for Nature, Conservation International, and The Nature Conservancy), the need for Western scientists to respect and honor traditional lifeways, and the need for native peoples to blend their traditional knowledge with the knowledge of modern ecology. When conservationists and native peoples acknowledge the interdependence of biodiversity conservation and cultural survival, Dowie writes, they can together create a new and much more effective paradigm for conservation.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. With a beautiful balance of critique and sympathy, Dowie (*Losing Ground*) challenges the halos of the major multinational conservation nonprofits, including the Nature Conservancy and the Worldwide Fund for Nature, in this exposÃ© of their disastrous treatment and expulsions of indigenous peoples living in nature reserves and parks. Dowie traces the myth of wilderness as an idealized version of nature to John Muir, the Godfather of Conservation, who denied that Indians ever lived in Yosemite despite their longtime cultivation of the area; he was revolted by their eating habits and uncleanliness and said they had no place in the landscape. This American concoction of a pristine wilderness park, and the idea that humans are not a part of nature, was exported throughout the world, wreaking havoc among both dislocated indigenous people and the environments that they had nurtured with traditional knowledge, for hundreds, even thousands of years. Dowie comes to a surprisingly optimistic conclusion, noting recent collaborations between indigenous peoples and conservation organizations— who are beginning to realize that only by preserving cultural diversity can biological diversity be protected, and vice versa. (May) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

As a journalist, Mark Dowie has always been a few steps ahead of the pack, and with *Conservation Refugees* he's once again staked out a difficult and fascinating terrain: the indigenous peoples that, all the way back to the founding of Yosemite, have been invisible or worse to the conservation movement. A vision of wilderness that makes no place for people has long held sway in environmental circles, but there are signs it is coming to an end -- and not a moment too soon. Dowie's book advances the critical work of developing a new, more encompassing vision of nature, which makes it one of the most important contributions to conservation in many years. (Michael Pollan, author of *The Omnivore's Dilemma* and *In Defense of Food*) Mark Dowie is, pound for pound, one of the best investigative journalists around. (Studs Terkel, author of *Working*) Unlike a fine wine, Mark Dowie has not mellowed with age. This book proves it. (John Passacantando, former Executive Director, Greenpeace USA) A beautiful balance of critique and sympathy. (Publishers

Weekly)Far from being a hysterical diatribe...this exceptionally researched and documented study provides authoritative guidance toward a diverse and sustainable future. (Richard W. Grefrath Magill Book Reviews)In Conservation Refugees, Mark Dowie quotes delegates to the Fifth World Parks Conference: 'We were dispossessed in the name of kings and emperors, later in the name of state development, and now in the name of conservation.' Miwok, Basarwa, Ogiek, Mursi -- indigenous tribal peoples, like endangered species, are being driven to extinction. Their languages are swiftly dying and we're losing a huge resource in their invaluable knowledge derived from millennia in their respective homelands. Environmentalists, determined to preserve biological systems and entities, should now be equally driven to preserve aboriginal cultures. This is a most useful and important book. (William Kittredge, author of *The Nature of Generosity*)

I work in conservation in Uganda. This book should be read by everyone who works in (or donates to) conservation anywhere in the world, as it is always important to examine the work we do and think about how we can do it better. This book exposes some of the worst aspects of conservation, particularly some questionable practices that the Big 5 (TNC, CI, WWF, WCS and AWF) engage in to maintain their massive budgets. There are some holes in the book, however, and I was disappointed to find that he gives no viable alternative approaches to conservation. The success stories he cites are primarily forest-based, indigenous cultures that are still practicing their traditional methods of survival through care of their primary resource, the forest. He does not talk about the very different reality of communities that are heterogenous due to immigration, resettlement, etc, and who have no common historical practices to rely on to preserve their environment. The forest communities he talks about are also not dealing with the massive population pressures of the savanna areas in East Africa, and they are not agricultural to the extent that some other areas are, which causes encroachment on forests and other landscapes. This book could be the basis for an incredible graduate seminar about global conservation, both for what it does bring to the table and for what it doesn't bring. Definitely read this book, but read it with a critical eye. Thanks to Mark Dowie for fearless reporting.

Book Review from my blog: Conservation Refugees: The Hundred-Year Conflict between Global Conservation and Native Peoples by Mark DowieThe push to save the wilderness, wildlife and rivers, whether on the North American Continent or in the , or in Burma, seems such a worthy goal. It underlies much of the work of conservation groups and activist such as Green Peace Rainforest Networks. Sierra Club has a great leadership role in this regard and many conservations and

environmentalist have contributed to or supported such efforts. It is a rude awakening to discover in reading Dowie's book that what was thought to be a 'good deed' was not the whole story. His book, The Conservation Refugees, reports on how these efforts were consistently and intentionally, in many cases, undermining and even destroying native cultures and whole populations in the name of saving nature. Dowie reports how the National Park system was created on the backs of such tribal destruction. Dowie tells a startling story, with extensive references, of the creation of Yosemite National Park. It was widely held that the wilderness was uninhabited, wild so to speak. The few natives that were thought to be living there were seen as in the way of the conservation of nature and the wild. The National Park Service was ordered to forcibly remove them from the new designated boundaries. They were driven out several times based on a belief that they were uninvolved in the health of the wilderness. The tribes crept back in repeatedly to tend to what they considered a sacred duty to manage their role in the forest health. It was decades before it was clear the significant management practices they had for creating healthy forest eco-systems. The local people had what Dowie calls "traditional ecological knowledge" (TEK) which was utilized to engage in fostering healthy ecosystems. Such practices included controlled burning to regenerate the forest, managing streams to increase healthy fisheries and transporting and transplanting species based on an understanding of companion species that promoted vitality of the forests. The Miwok tribes who lived in Yosemite for over two hundred years, having inhabited the forests that are now Yosemite, had no word for "wilderness" in their language. They had for generations been involved in managing the forest eco-system, long before European settlers arrived. What Europeans saw as wilderness were well managed forests and ecosystems. Dowie reports that the Yosemite model of removing Native Peoples who had the TEK, became a Global model, in fact, it is called the Yosemite Model. It has now spread around the world as part of the conservation movement and has undermined the health of ecosystems by removing the very people who hold the TEK in managing for real sustainability, long term viability of forests and robust living ecosystems that support life for all of us. Businesses who are supporting conservation and eco-sustainability may want to check out Dowie's work. It extensively documented with information and stories not seen elsewhere, with the exception of Kat Anderson in Tending the Wild. But Dowie's book points to the Global systematic adoption of a model that destroys Native People cultures and lives and by doing so undermines the very intention of the conservation movement. What are you supporting with your business practices in philanthropy, building and supply decisions? Q&A with a tribal elder to follow. [...] Author of: [http://www..com/Beyond-Corporate-Responsibility-Reimagining-Sustainability/dp/0470648686/ref=sr\\_1\\_11?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1284255061&sr=8-11](http://www..com/Beyond-Corporate-Responsibility-Reimagining-Sustainability/dp/0470648686/ref=sr_1_11?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1284255061&sr=8-11)

Conservation Refugees by Mark Dowie puts in perspective in one source the many reports I've picked up here and there over decades on aboriginal people being displaced by environmental preserves, etc., and adds substantially to my scattered knowledge. In the U.S., the examples, especially in the Adirondack region where I live in New York State, involve methods that are somewhat subtle, but work rather well. Jobs are eliminated by land acquisition and preservation-oriented zoning control by high levels of government, and the youth are thereby driven out. Stores and businesses close, schools close for lack of students, in a continual swing toward depopulation. Dowe denotes the people elsewhere in the world who are affected as "sacrifice populations," an precise, powerful phrase which will help me in communicating about the deliberate campaign to eliminate the population and traces of the historic culture of this vast area of northern New York. - Carol LaGrasse

He has such impressive investigative journalism! The examples, direct quotes, and knowledge he presents is astounding and so interesting. He starts every chapter with a great quote, usually from a tribal elder. The language is very easy to follow, and he is passionate. The only thing I would say is I could grasp whatever concept it is he wants to get across, much quicker than a whole book. He could have written an essay and I would have grasped the same ideas. I do appreciate his extensive examples though. This really is comprehensive and tells the specific stories of multiple groups of people, so if you did need to convince others of the concept there is plenty of ammo and evidence. He also takes the time to give some history on each of the groups he discusses. You will be amazed to read the truth this guy has about Yosemite.

Very good introduction to the problem of conservation when local people is not taken into consideration. It must be read by all managers of natural resources around the world

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