



Encounters with Nature: Essays By Paul Shepard

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While most scholars work within the safe, sturdy confines of conventional academics, Paul Shepard moved beyond convention, out under the open sky where he was free to turn and peer in every direction. Blending, sifting, and culling massive mounds of scientific, historical, and deductive data—drawn from biology, ecology, ethology, anthropology, archaeology, psychology, sociology, philosophy, and even art—he searched for shards of truth, then fit those pieces together to give logical and meaningful shape to our world. His interdisciplinary approach brought together diverse fields of research, embodying in a sense Edward O. Wilson's recently proposed idea of "consilience"—the unity of knowledge needed in the fragmented world of academic specialization.

Throughout the vast body of Shepard's literary legacy, certain themes appear repeatedly: the aesthetics and perception of landscape and nature; animals and their pervasive influence on our humanity; ontogeny, the development of the individual in complicity with nature and with culture; and "place" as the grounding of our being. *Encounters with Nature* brings together twenty-one essays written over a span of four decades that explore those themes and chronicle an interlocking progression of knowledge and insight that certifies Paul Shepard as one of the most brilliant thinkers of our time.

The essays were selected and edited by Florence Shepard, who also provides a preface and substantial notes that introduce each section; her contributions offer illuminating biographical information that places the essays within the context of Shepard's life. In addition, the book features an introductory essay by writer David Petersen that discusses the meaning and importance of Shepard's guiding ideas.

Encounters with Nature gives the reader a deeper understanding of Paul Shepard's thought, bringing his intellectual development into closer focus and providing a valuable overview of his life and vision. The book will bring a greater appreciation of the prescience and timelessness of Shepard's writings to his many followers and friends, and can also serve to introduce new readers to the remarkable breadth and depth of his work and insight.

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