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Edited by

[Bron Taylor](#)

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genocide in efforts to control its rich natural resources. Many of them, like the Mai-Mai and the Lord's Resistance Army, use religion as an inspirational and legitimating force for some of the conflict's most unspeakable atrocities, including the crucifixion of their opponents.

Almost from its outset, the war drew no fewer than six other African countries into the conflict, all of them driven primarily by the quest to profit from exploiting the region's extraordinary mineral resources: copper, cobalt, coltan, diamonds, and gold, not to mention timber and ivory. For the victims of "Africa's First World War," hardship has reshaped local religion, as noted by Pulitzer Laureate for Journalism Paul Salopek: "Cults of many types have erupted everywhere in wartime Congo. In hard times, imported Christianity has been whittled and shaped to meet local demand; relief from the suffering and uncertainty of a war the world ignores" (*The Chicago Tribune*, 12/10/00).

Laurent Kabila was assassinated by one of his own bodyguards in 2001 and succeeded by his son, Joseph Kabila. Like many other contemporary African heads of state seeking either to alleviate their people's poverty (the DRC GNP was \$78 in 1999) or to enrich themselves and their minions, DRC President Joseph Kabila values foreign investment in the mining and timber industries much more than the Congo's natural environment. Mining, hunting, and timber regulations have been virtually non-existent since war first broke out in 1996, and over a million refugees from Rwanda and elsewhere have sought haven in the Congolese forest and surrounding regions. An environmental catastrophe is clearly underway in one of Earth's most precious and biodiverse regions. National parks have not been spared: between 1995 and 1999 alone, one park lost a third of its elephants to ivory hunters and hungry miners, and today bushmeat, along with timber, is one of the region's leading exports. Regrettably, the recent UN intervention, ceasefires, and withdrawals of foreign troops are unlikely to be of much benefit to the Congo River Basin's gravely endangered environment: Presently the Kabila regime is orchestrating an economic recovery program with the World Bank that hinges on the exploitation of the nation's natural resources, much like when his father sold off the Congo's mineral resources for self-enrichment and to pay for protection provided by his foreign supporters, namely Uganda and Rwanda; much like Mobutu had done to become one of the world's richest men; and much like the Belgians had done in one of the most atrocious colonial conquests in world history. Meanwhile, the Kimbanguist Church, which was founded by Congolese healer named Simon Kimbangu in the 1920s, continues to grow, as thousands of recent converts await the coming of a black messiah to the Congo.

Terry Rey

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- See also: African Religions and Nature Conservation; Biodiversity and Religion in Equatorial Africa; Kimbanguism (Central Africa); Pygmies (Mbuti Foragers) and Bila Farmers of the Ituri Forest; West Africa.

Conservation Biology

During the late 1970s and 1980s, concerned scientists and resource managers began to shape a new synthetic discipline that integrated scientific knowledge from a variety of disciplines, including the social sciences, with the goal of conserving biodiversity. They called this new field "conservation biology." As the discipline has grown, it has drawn upon the natural sciences (including genetics, population and evolutionary biology, systematics, and biogeography), the agricultural sciences, and the traditional resource management disciplines (e.g., forestry, wildlife, and fisheries management). It has also welcomed the infusion of knowledge from anthropology, economics, and other social sciences, as well as the humanities, illuminating human behavior in a way that can be used to promote biodiversity conservation. The envisioned level of interdisciplinary inquiry has yet to be realized, however, according to Stephen Humphrey, an officer and Board Member of the Society of Conservation Biology from 1990 through this writing). But it is possible, he believes, to see two forces that animate the field: "Biophilia," and a belief that conservation-related "science should be applicable to conservation of biological diversity" (author's interview, July 2003).

Many of conservation biology's most effective visionaries were motivated by one or another form of nature spirituality involving a profound sense of connection to the Earth's living systems. Indeed, the breadth and inclusiveness of conservation biology allowed it to incorporate and build upon ideas emerging from environmental ethics, and provided space for scientists and others to explore the cultural and spiritual dimensions of conservation. Some of its leaders have also been involved with deep ecology or radical environmental movements, giving conservation

biology an audience wider than might otherwise have been the case. A quick look at several early leaders in the field, including the first two editors of its premier journal, shows that conservation science and nature religion sometimes cross-fertilize, and that important hybrids can result.

In 1978 biologist Michael Soulé organized the “First International Conference on Conservation Biology” at the San Diego campus of the University of California, subsequently publishing an anthology that helped to herald the emergence of the new field. According to conservation historian (and long-term board member of the Society of Conservation Biology) Curt Meine, science had for decades been deployed in the conservation cause; in this sense, conservation biology was nothing new. However, conservation biology represented an intensified, self-conscious effort to synthesize “many fields of knowledge around the general goal of protecting and perpetuating biological diversity, which the traditional disciplines had not addressed adequately” (personal communication, June 2003). Soulé organized a second conference at the University of Michigan in 1985 and is credited by many as the leading founder of the Society for Conservation Biology in 1986, which began publishing its flagship journal *Conservation Biology* in 1987.

Interestingly, in between these first two conservation biology conferences, Soulé organized another conference during an extended sabbatical from the academy that he took at the Los Angeles Zen Center. Held in Los Angeles in 1981 and no doubt motivated by his understanding of Buddhist ethics, the conference explored the relationships between religion and ecology. Soulé asked Deep Ecology’s founding philosopher Arne Naess to participate, and the acquaintance spurred a long and close friendship. Soulé invited Naess to give the keynote address at the second conservation biology conference “because I felt he provided a better philosophical foundation for conservation and biodiversity than anybody since [Aldo] Leopold.” Soulé added, Naess “has been a major influence on my life.” (Soulé’s quotes are from author’s interviews, 27 February near Tucson, Arizona or by telephone, 15 July 1997.)

David Ehrenfeld was another key figure in the emergence of conservation biology, and served as the founding editor of *Conservation Biology*. This is of particular interest in that Ehrenfeld’s 1978 book, *The Arrogance of Humanism* was a landmark in the emergence of non-anthropocentric environmental ethics, and is considered a classic by many deep ecologists. It elegantly expressed their melancholy over the extinction crisis and their perception of a defiled world:

We must live in our century and wait, enduring somehow the unavoidable sadness . . . nothing is free of the taint of our arrogance. We have defiled everything, much of it forever, even the farthest

jungles of the Amazon and the air above the mountains, even the everlasting sea which gave us birth (Ehrenfeld 1978: 269).

A third leading figure is Reed Noss, Ehrenfeld’s successor as editor of *Conservation Biology*. As a young man Noss was an early and regular contributor to *Earth First!*, getting involved shortly after hearing a news report of some of its early antics and acts of civil disobedience in the early 1980s. He expressed his early enthusiasm for the movement in an early article written from a “Taoist perspective” claiming that “ecological resistance (including sabotage) is to the ecocentric [individual who views entire ecosystems as having intrinsic moral value] an extended form of self-defense: regrettable but necessary.” Fusing such militancy with deep ecology, Noss called *Earth First!* “the ecological resistance embodiment of Deep Ecology” (1983: 13). His fifth-degree black belt in Shito-Ryu karate (see Noss and Cooperrider 1994: 417) suggests that for him Eastern religions fit well with his love of nature.

Noss withdrew from *Earth First!* by the end of the decade, having become critical of the anti-scientific bent of increasing numbers of its activists. But he continued to promote deep ecology and Naess’ notion of an “ecological self” – a wider-than-human identity that extends the center of moral concern beyond humans to all species. He articulated such views even in his scientific writings (e.g., Noss and Cooperrider 1994: 21–4) and continued to work with Dave Foreman (a co-founder of *Earth First!*) and other radical environmental activists who appreciated conservation biology, many of whom also quit *Earth First!* while retaining their ecocentric value systems, in which nature is considered to be of intrinsic, moral value. Indeed, Noss subsequently served as science-advisor to the Wildlands Project, which was founded in 1991 by Foreman, Soulé, and a number of other prominent conservationists. It articulates a long-term biodiversity strategy for the Americas based on the principles of conservation biology.

It was Noss’ research, however, not his grassroots environmental activism or deep ecology affinities, that led to his becoming the second editor of *Conservation Biology* (a post he held most of the time between 1993 and 1997). This prestigious position was offered in part because in numerous journal articles he had advanced significantly the conceptual foundations of the discipline.

Quite a number of other conservation biologists have affinity with deep ecology and have contributed both to scientific and radical environmental journals. Two who have put such spirituality in writing include Bill Willers and Ed Grumbine. The title of Willers’ edited book, *Learning to Listen to the Land*, reflects its pantheistic (and animistic) ethos, and it includes excerpts from an eclectic group of writers with deep ecological sensibilities. A biology professor who founded the Superior Wilderness

Action Network (SWAN), Willers was unsuccessfully sued in the 1990s, along with his nemesis, the United States Forest Service (USFS), for allegedly violating the religious freedom protections guaranteed in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The lawsuit by a group of loggers and their conservative allies alleged that the defendants had conspired to establish “deep ecology religion” by protecting forests that the defendants, according to the lawsuit, considered sacred (Taylor and Geffen 2003).

Ed Grumbine is director of the Sierra Institute, an affiliate of the University of California, Santa Cruz, which promotes wilderness experience and research. Like Noss, Soulé, and Willers, he has also written for radical environmental journals. And his book *Ghost Bears: Exploring the Biodiversity Crisis* is laced through with deep ecology themes. In it he cites movement elders, including Aldo Leopold, Arne Naess, Henry David Thoreau, and the poet Robinson Jeffers, and he explicitly endorsed Naess’ notion of the ecological self and defended deep ecology. Praising the Council of All Beings, which he described as an important ritual process that strives to evoke and deepen such an ecological identity, he also confessed that the ritual changed his life (Grumbine 1992: 233, 230–6).

To note that during the late twentieth century some of the key figures promoting the new field of conservation biology were both motivated by and promoted nature religion in no way suggests that their science was compromised. Nor does it prove that other conservation biologists have been similarly motivated; indeed, both Meine and Humphrey think only a small minority of those involved in conservation biology would likely consider themselves to be explicitly or overtly motivated by deep ecological spirituality or other religious sentiments. Indeed, the extent to which conservation biologists are more likely than individuals from other groups to have affinity with deep ecology or other nature-related spiritualities is an as yet unresearched empirical question, worthy of quantitative survey research. It is notable, however, that David Takacs, who in *The Idea of Biodiversity: Philosophies of Paradise* interviewed dozens of scientists whose careers have been devoted to understanding and protecting biological diversity (including Soulé and E.O. Wilson) reported that a spiritual connection to nature was a recurrent theme among them. Qualitative research thus suggests that there may be a significant correlation between the pursuit of careers in ecological science (like conservation biology) and nature spirituality.

For his part, Michael Soulé stressed that conservation biology depends first and foremost on the scientific method and not on spirituality or deep ecological value theory. During my interview with him he worried that a historical overview like the one I have provided here might be used by the enemies of conservation to discredit conservation biology as somehow “pagan.” His perception

was that few involved in conservation biology had interest in Eastern or alternative religions or deep ecology. Based on their own experiences both Humphrey and Meine have reached similar conclusions: most conservation biologists are focused primarily on their scientific work and its application in solving conservation problems. While such a focus does not preclude an interest in, and commitment to, philosophical or spiritual self-reflection, conservation biologists tend to place their scientific commitments first.

This strong commitment of conservation biologists, however, suggests a more complex relationship between their scientific interests and their personal belief systems. Indeed, the role of nature spirituality may be much more prevalent than would be obvious from a cursory review of the everyday experiences of those engaged in conservation biology and its professional organizations. It may be that shedding further light on this matter will depend on devising a way to ask conservation scientists such questions without engendering fear among them that an honest answer would compromise their credibility and thus damage their work and careers. In the twentieth century, as historian Stephen Fox has amply demonstrated, environmentalists often downplayed nature-related spirituality in the interest of not alienating the more traditionally religious publics they need to persuade. An open question is how strong this tendency will be in the twenty-first century among environmentalists and those scientists who are their allies.

Bron Taylor

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See also: Biodiversity and Religion in Equatorial Africa; Biophilia; Council of All Beings; Deep Ecology; Earth First! and the Earth Liberation Front; Environmental Ethics; Jeffers, John Robinson; Leopold, Aldo; Naess, Arne; Radical Environmentalism; Restoration Ecology and Ritual; Social Science on Religion and Nature; Thoreau, Henry David; Wilson, Edward O.

Con-spirando Women's Collective (Santiago, Chile)

Con-spirando is a women's collective working in the areas of ecofeminism, theology and spirituality which began in 1991. I am a founding member of this collective. We publish a quarterly journal, *Con-spirando: Revista Latinoamericana de Ecofeminismo, Espiritualidad y Teología*, hold workshops, seminars and an annual summer school on ecofeminist theology, spirituality and ethics, and offer a yearly cycle of rituals.

In our magazine's first issue, we set out our purpose, which more than ten years later still defines what we are about: in the patriarchal culture in which we live, women's contributions are not taken seriously. This is particularly true in the area of theology. Women are absent as subjects doing theology and also as a major subject-matter of this theological reflection. Our lives, our everyday religious practice and our spirituality, are simply not present in current theological reflection. Absent too, are our experiences of suffering, joy and solidarity – our experiences of the sacred. Besides expressing our criticism of patriarchal culture, we also seek to contribute to the creation of a culture that allows theological reflection to flower from our bodies, our spirits – in short, our experiences as women.

We seek theologies that take into account the differences of class, race and gender that so mark Latin America. We hope to open new spaces where women can dig deeply into our own life experiences without fear. These experiences are often negative, even traumatic, in terms of the religious formation we have received. We seek spaces where women can experience new ways of being in community; where we can celebrate our faith more authentically and creatively; where we can rediscover and value our roots, our history and our traditions – in short, to engage in an interreligious dialogue that helps us to recover the essential task of

theology, which is to search out and raise the questions of ultimate meaning.

We are convinced that, to bring about relationships marked by justice and equality, we must celebrate our differences and work toward a greater pluralism worldwide. To this end, we need theologies that unmask the hierarchies in which we live; theologies that, rather than seeking to mediate Mystery, celebrate and explore the Holy without reductionism or universalisms. We call for theologies that question anthropocentrism and that promote the transformation of relationships based on dominance of one race, nationality, gender or age group over another and of the human over other forms of life. Such theologies will have profound political consequences.

Such a feminist perspective based on our diversity of class, race, age and culture must also take up our love as well as our anguish for all life on the planet that we feel is so threatened today. We call this posture ecofeminism. It is within this perspective that we seek a spirituality that will both heal and liberate, that will nourish our Christian tradition as well as take up the long-repressed roots of the native peoples of this continent. We want to explore the liberating dimensions of our experience and imagination of the Holy. To do this, we "*con-spirar juntas*" (*Con-spirando* 1992: 2–5).

Most of the members of Con-spirando come from the Christian tradition, but we are critical of the patriarchal underpinnings of Christian theologies and try to relativize the Judeo-Christian myths and resurface other, more indigenous myths that have been suppressed, while at the same time always remaining vigilant to patriarchal remnants in these myths as well.

Con-spirando is not a purely academic organization, nor are we associated with any church organization, which frees us from the control of both. We are organized as a collective: we are a non-hierarchical, multicultural team that has both Latin American members as well as members from other countries where relations of justice and tenderness are the goal. We are committed to the following:

First, the belief in the wisdom of our bodies and the priority of knowing through our corporeality in relationship. Here, feeling becomes a way of knowing. Second, efforts to search out non-hierarchical ways of being that model "power with" rather than "power over." Third, the sharing of new ways to celebrate, new rituals that nurture our emerging spiritualities and our commitments. Fourth, the reexamination of those foundational myths upon which Western, Christian culture is based in order to relativize them and search for new myths that can water our emerging spiritualities, theologies and ethics. And fifth, an ecofeminist ethic that moves toward the ecological self – my neighbor and I are one. All are my kin, from the folks in the *barrio* (neighborhood) to the animals, the mountains, the rivers.