



Essays on Nature and Landscape

Susan Fenimore Cooper

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Susan Fenimore Cooper (1813-1894), though often overshadowed by her celebrity father, James Fenimore Cooper, has recently become recognized as both a pioneer of American nature writing and an early advocate for ecological sustainability. Editors Rochelle Johnson and Daniel Patterson have assembled here a collection of ten pieces by Cooper that represent her most accomplished nature writing and the fullest articulation of her environmental principles. With one exception, these essays have not been available in print since their original appearance in Cooper's lifetime.

A portrait of her thoughts on nature and how we should live and think in relation to it, this collection both contextualizes Cooper's magnum opus, *Rural Hours* (1850), and demonstrates how she perceived her work as a nature writer. Frequently her essays are models of how to catch and keep the interest of a reader when writing about plants, animals, and our relationship to the physical environment. By lamenting the decline of bird populations, original forests, and overall biodiversity, she champions preservation and invokes a collective environmental conscience that would not begin to awaken until the end of her life and century.

The selections include independent essays, miscellaneous introductions and prefaces, and the first three installments from Cooper's work of literary ornithology, "Otsego Leaves," arguably her most mature and fully realized contribution to American environmental writing. In addition to a foreword by John Elder, one of the nation's leading environmental educators, an introduction analyzes each essay in various cultural contexts. Brief but handy textual notes supplement the essays. Perfect for nature-writing aficionados, environmental historians, and environmental activists, this collection will radically expand Cooper's importance to the history of American environmental thought.

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