

his command of ecology is limited and he occasionally strays into places where a good technical edit would have been helpful. He is not overly concerned with citing sources and shows a tendency to be swayed by particular dimensions of his topic without a critical view of the results. Rawlence loves to travel and shares many stories about people, food and the nitty gritty of fieldwork. These inevitably shift attention away from the science and from the boreal forest itself and the changes it is undergoing. If this is fine with you then you will enjoy this book. But if you are looking for a book with depth and breadth about changes in the boreal or a sophisticated understanding of the underlying science, this will not be the volume for you.

Rawlence is very alarmed by what he learns and he conveys this well through phrases such as ‘the spirits of the tundra and the forest [are] shrieking their warnings’ (p. 74). Ultimately, he is a romantic experiencing and documenting the vast changes in the boreal, and writing with a poet’s pen and a deeply worried heart. His is the perspective of a northern-hemisphere writer and a lover of trees. It is not the global perspective he claims, a fact that changes nothing for the diverse human cultures and the millions and millions of organisms struggling to make their lives and follow their evolutionary paths in the rapidly changing boreal forests.

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**Environmental Defenders: Deadly Struggles for Life and Territory** edited by Mary Menton and Philippe Le Billon (2021) 298 pp., Routledge, Abingdon, UK. ISBN 978-0-367-64964-7 (pbk), GBP 29.99.

Human society finds itself at a pivotal moment in history. The rise of virtual communication channels and social media has helped to spread news faster than ever before, beyond physical boundaries. These platforms have also become preferred tools for calling for support when demanding justice or exposing injustices, and access to social media has helped ecological/environmental defenders to draw attention to instances of private companies and governments not complying with environmental law. But if there are rules in place to protect the environment, why do injustices continue?

During 2002–2019, close to 2,000 people were killed in 57 countries while defending their land against a variety of threats. *Environmental Defenders* provides a compendium of essays explaining who these defenders are, and shines a light on the difficulties and hardship faced by them. The book also explores what can be done to support them, and provides examples of the power of collective action against such injustices: when people come together, no matter their gender, age or social class, they can succeed in preventing even big, international companies from depleting their land. When we think of collective action, perhaps the first image that comes to mind is of people taking to the streets, protesting. This book, however, focuses on people who do not march through city streets, who have no access to social media, and who suffer most severely under the consequences of injustice: the first-line defenders. These people are at risk of losing not only their land, but their livelihoods and identity as a result of corporate exploitation of natural resources.

This book studies the complex relationship between corporations, governments and communities, and the struggles, repression and violence that environmental defenders encounter. Twenty-one carefully selected case studies from around the globe

explore the consequences of a variety of development projects, from fossil fuel and palm oil extraction to so-called green projects such as the creation of protected areas that involved forceful evictions of local communities and violations of human rights. For example, during 1950–1990 Maasai people living in the Ngorongoro area in Tanzania’s Crater Highlands were violently evicted from their land and cultivation of food crops was banned, jeopardizing their livelihoods. Examples such as this demonstrate that projects aiming to conserve biodiversity can compromise the human rights of Indigenous people and local communities if these groups are not considered or involved.

The book also recognizes the gendered dimensions of the repression suffered by environmental defenders. For example, in Ecuador when men were targeted by their own government and threatened with imprisonment or death when standing up against large-scale oil and coal mining, women had to defend not only their bodies against sexual attacks, a preferred method to suppress them and inflict fear, but also their land, as all men in the villages had to go into hiding to prevent persecution by the government.

The stories shared in *Environmental Defenders* made me realize that although we have been witnessing an ecological awakening in recent years in many parts of the world, with unprecedented levels of public engagement in support of environmental causes, this is still not enough to turn the tide of ecological breakdown, particularly in low-income countries. This eye-opening book is essential reading for those trying to understand the struggle of environmental defenders across the world.

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