

Educational Media Reviews Online (EMRO)

Lords of Nature: Life in a Land of Great Predators

2009

Distributed by The Video Project, PO Box 411376, San Francisco, CA 94141-1376; 800-475-2638

Produced by Green Fire Productions

DVD, color, 60 min.

Jr. High - Adult

Agriculture, American Studies, Animal Behavior, Anthropology, Biology, Environmental Studies, Geography, History, Science

Reviewed by Meghann Matwichuk, Morris Library, University of Delaware

Recommended

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Lords of Nature takes a close look at the changing landscapes of the Yellowstone plateau and the canyons at Zion, examining how predator eradication has upended the fragile balance of each ecosystem. The filmmakers approach these oddities as environmental detectives solving geographical mysteries, lending the production a sense of intrigue.

Beginning with the disappearance of aspen trees in Yellowstone circa the 1930s and 40s, scientists discover how wolf extermination and the subsequent unchecked explosion of grazing animals meant that the aspens would grow no bigger than saplings. This discovery leads to a reexamination of how humans (specifically agriculturalists) have interacted with the natural world throughout American history. Growing awareness of the concept of land health spurs imaginative developments favoring integration, as those who work with the land rediscover the value of predators across the globe. These efforts have proven more successful in the Midwestern states; an atmosphere of fear and distrust has led to tensions between wildlife advocates and farmers in the West.

Interviews with practitioners, government officials, and scientists are presented alongside wildlife and landscape footage. The filmmakers situate the issues in an historical context, which is especially important for the viewers' understanding of how schools of thought pertaining to geology and land management have evolved over the last century. Overall this film is a tightly constructed, engaging exploration of a uniquely important and controversial issue which would be appropriate for use in an array of disciplines.

SUGGESTED SHORT EXCERPT

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