



Defending the Land of the Jaguar: A History of Conservation in Mexico

By Lane Simonian



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Mexican conservationists have sometimes observed that it is difficult to find a country less interested in the conservation of its natural resources than is Mexico. Yet, despite a long history dedicated to the pursuit of development regardless of its environmental consequences, Mexico has an equally long, though much less developed and appreciated, tradition of environmental conservation.

Lane Simonian here offers the first panoramic history of conservation in Mexico from pre-contact times to the current Mexican environmental movement. He explores the origins of conservation and environmental concerns in Mexico, the philosophies and endeavors of Mexican conservationists, and the enactment of important conservation laws and programs. This heretofore untold story, drawn from interviews with leading Mexican conservationists as well as archival research, will be important reading throughout the international community of activists, researchers, and concerned citizens interested in the intertwined issues of conservation and development.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The dismal state of Mexico's environment was a major wrangling point in the recent negotiations of the North American Free Trade Agreement, which would lead many readers to believe that Mexico has little, if any, historical interest in conservation. Independent scholar Simonian points out that Mexico actually has a long history of trying to protect its environment, one that stretches back to before the Spaniards' arrival. Simonian doesn't glorify these past civilizations but instead points out that their concern for and appreciation of natural beauty coincided with ancient farming techniques that to this day result in poor crop yields and force Mexico to import such staples as corn and beans. Readers will sympathize with the frustration of environmentalists from Miguel Angel de Quevedo to Homero Aridjis as they grapple with the question of conservation versus industrialization and struggle to prove they can coexist. Avid green readers will enjoy this clearly written book but will be disappointed to discover that it merely recounts Mexico's journey to the brink of ecological disaster without offering any advice on how, now facing a new economic crisis, the country can avoid going over the edge.

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Review

"Simonian has provided us with a history of conservation in Mexico that will be a standard text for some time to come. It is concise and well-written and, because it makes a complex topic easily accessible, it will be widely used by teachers as well as specialists and activists." (*American Historical Review*)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Annette Puente:

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