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Peer reviewed

Review: *Orion: People and Nature*

By the Myrin Institute

Reviewed by [John R. Ferguson](#)
Waterford, Ontario

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Orion: People & Nature. Great Barrington, MA: The Myrin Institute. Quarterly. ISSN: 1058-3130. One year of *Orion* (four issues) included with \$25.00 annual membership fee in the Orion Society. Mail to 195 Main Street, Great Barrington, MA 01230, or fax to 413/528-0676. E-MAIL: Orion@orionsociety.org

In a recent book on Canadian environmental policy, Hessing and Howlett argue that "it is not accuracy of knowledge but the lack of political willingness to implement that knowledge in the interests of protecting human lives that allows environmental degradation" (p. 200). If this is true, reverence may precede science in promoting environmental protection and making alternative modes of relating to nature increasingly relevant. *Orion* helps to fulfil this lacuna by exploring the manifold ways in which nature is essential to our daily lives.

Orion is a journal about "people and nature" that has been around since 1982. It documents the strained yet poignant relationship between humans and their ecological context. While its subject matter is as free ranging as the wild itself, it maintains an impressive thematic and coherent presentation. In the four editions (reviewed v.15 #4 - v. 16 #3) there are articles, essays, photo essays, poems, reviews and letters about topics such as ecosophy, catch and release fishing, aspen trees, buffalo, cows, cougars, the seasons, building a local library, environmental justice and racism, national parks, butterflies, orchards, inter-species music, fathers and sons, the Web, language, Mount St. Helens, sustainable logging, neighborhood renewal, African Americans and nature, loggers and tree huggers, and arts and the earth. Writers include bell hooks, David Ehrenfeld, Wendell Barry, David Ferry, John Elder, Barry Lopez, and Bill McKibbin to name a very few. It explores nature as a trail in the woods rather than as a labyrinth of policies, numbers and economic interests. *Orion* approaches species as creatures and movements as people. It attempts to re-place and repopulate the cognitive horizon with the aspects of nature which will matter long after the remaining species celebrate the passage of our ephemeral pursuit of "wealth". It is direct sustenance to the environmentalist's arduous

diurnal rhythmic of hope waking us up and pain tucking us in.

Environmentalism has been largely reduced to what entrenched and intransigent institutions are able to express above the cacophony of self-interest and the restlessness of global capital, but this does not stop Orion from approaching nature as intimacy. This makes it both a risky and a necessary approach to promoting a sustainable relationship between people and nature. Orion's alternative approach may be increasingly lost on many in the shuddering juggernaut of modern economic "rationality," but it is also the kind of voice without which reverence for nature will starve and extinction will thrive. Orion provides as palpable a grasp of the worth of "nature" as any journal can provide.

The aim of the magazine is "to characterize conceptually and practically our responsibilities to the earth and all forms of life, and to explore the ethic of human stewardship... [through] respect and admiration for the earth... [and to] help us deepen our personal connection with the natural world as a source of enrichment and inner renewal". The journal supports The Orion Society whose aim is "[To] help heal the fractured relationship between people and nature by undertaking environmental education programs...." Whether these lofty objectives will be accomplished cannot be determined by one reader, but based on reading one year of the journal, it progresses toward these goals with the same diversity, profundity, inspiration and engagement that will be required of humans if we are to "succeed" as a species.

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