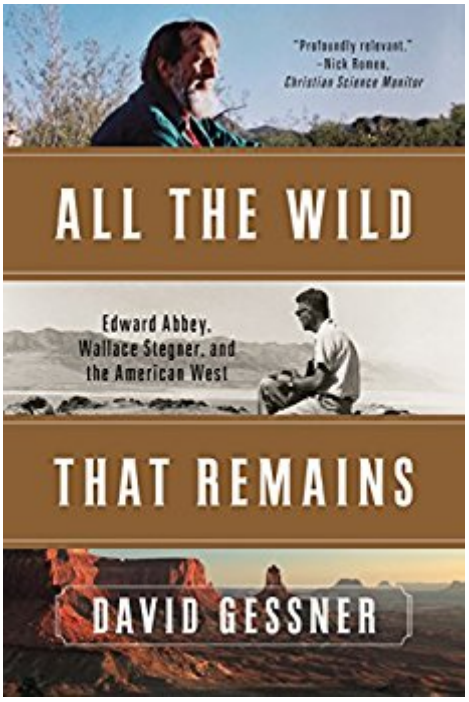
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All The Wild That Remains: Edward Abbey, Wallace Stegner, And The American West



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Synopsis

An homage to the West and to two great writers who set the standard for all who celebrate and defend it.Archetypal wild man Edward Abbey and proper, dedicated Wallace Stegner left their footprints all over the western landscape. Now, award-winning nature writer David Gessner follows the ghosts of these two remarkable writer-environmentalists from Stegner's birthplace in Saskatchewan to the site of Abbey's pilgrimages to Arches National Park in Utah, braiding their stories and asking how they speak to the lives of all those who care about the West.These two great westerners had very different ideas about what it meant to love the land and try to care for it, and they did so in distinctly different styles. Boozy, lustful, and irascible, Abbey was best known as the author of the novel The Monkey Wrench Gang (and also of the classic nature memoir Desert Solitaire), famous for spawning the idea of guerrilla actionsÃ¢â ¬â •known to admirers as "monkeywrenching" and to law enforcement as domestic terrorismÃ¢â ¬â •to disrupt commercial exploitation of western lands. By contrast, Stegner, a buttoned-down, disciplined, faithful family man and devoted professor of creative writing, dedicated himself to working through the system to protect western sites such as Dinosaur National Monument in Colorado.In a region beset by droughts and fires, by fracking and drilling, and by an ever-growing population that seems to be in the process of loving the West to death, Gessner asks: how might these two farseeing environmental thinkers have responded to the crisis?Gessner takes us on an inspiring, entertaining journey as he renews his own commitment to cultivating a meaningful relationship with the wild, confronting American overconsumption, and fighting environmental injusticeÃ¢â ¬â •all while reawakening the thrill of the words of his two great heroes.

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Customer Reviews

Dave Gessner teaches writing at UNC Wilmington. He is a prolific, enthusiastic writer with many books and many fans. He also showcases other writers at "Bill and Dave's Cocktail Hour", a website/blog he runs with fellow teacher/writer Bill Roorbach.Gessner's book of Western Visions has been in preparation for years; based in part on his formative years.Wallace Stegner articulated the West--it's beauty and environmental challenges--for two generations of North Americans, including myself. The visionary Stegner also ran the prototype writer's school at Stanford, many years before most such programs came into being. Thus Gessner was drawn to do a deep biographic study of his predecessor. The book contrasts "buttoned-down" professor Stegner with Ed Abbey, the free-spirited, free-wheeling, gifted writer who lived and wrote "Desert Solitaire" about his interludes as a ranger at Arches National Park.Gessner is on their trails; and the biographical stories are told during his own entertaining, salty western road trips.This is the mature Gessner book we have been waiting for. Given current and perennial Western issues of aridity, fracking, and overdevelopment, it is timely and utterly germane. And VERY entertaining. O the depth is there; and the fun too, on the road with Dave.

The only thing better than reading Edward Abbey or Wallace Stegner is to read yet another resonating western voice who can explain why these writers captivate us as much as the western landscape itself. David Gessner deepened my understanding of two of my favorite writers and also gave me moments to reflect inward. If you love the west and those who can write its experience authentically, you'll enjoy this book. Best read in the view of landscape such as the photo depicts.

The author has done a good job of discussing and covering the impact of Edward Abbey and Wallace Stegner on environmental activism in the west. I am much more familar with Stegner than

Abbey, having read almost all that Stegner wrote, but only a few of Abbey's books. Even so, in his writing about Stegner, I learned things that I not known and also aspects of his character that really made me think. I wish that the author had concentrated more on Stegner as it does appear that of the two, he was the more complex.A minor point concerns the title of the book: '...the American West.' which is a little mis-leading in that the book really is about the Rocky Mountain Region.The most interesting and fascinating parts of the book were the Acknowledgements and Notes on Sources. These two parts were really a description of how the author did his research, his preparations, and the people he interviewed. These two sections could be expanded into a book on how history books are written.

This is a beautifully written hybrid of several genres, but the best part is that, if you're like me, you're quickly drawn into the author's journey of exploration into the lives of these two seminal writers of the west and nature. While I learned a lot about Stegner and Abbey and about the west, I particularly enjoyed spending time with the eminently reasonable Gessner as he discovered and ruminated on the lives of these two very different environmentalists and on his own relationship with nature.

Part memoir, part socratic thought process, part travelogue, and part biography, Gessner's new book is a must-read.A visit to India two years back left me paralyzed about our ability to tackle environmental problems as humans. As someone who grew up there I saw how development has led to incredible degradation, conflict, and a runaway train wreck for arresting climate change. Gessner's book has finally allowed me to find some of my footing again, and fired me up about doing, in however small and imperfect a way possible, what I can do.Gessner shows us that we need both Abbey-ian anger and action and Stegner-ian reserve and resolve in our actions and our communications. Gessner walks us through his own thought processes on growing up, climate change, parenthood, ecological devastation, beauty, and wildness; and each time he does that, I felt like I was engaging in an internal dialogue with the author and with myself. These dialectics are interspersed with biography that gives perspective as well as inspires.The book pulses with the beauty of the west, and Gessner's love for it. And re-ignites my own flame for the red-rock and the beautiful blue sky.

This is Gessner's best book yet. I am a huge fan, but this is the most sweeping and powerful piece he's written (and I've enjoyed every one of his books). Sad to say I am a completely ignorant

easterner when it comes to Abbey and Stegner. I know that I read and enjoyed Crossing to Safety, decades ago, but clearly I need to go read Big Rock Candy Mountain and Desert Solitaire. Aside from getting a lovely education on these western gems, I loved the travelogue. Gessner never takes himself too seriously and his humor often catches you off guard. There is a great scene during one of his trips where he's at the kitchen table drinking with (wild) Doug Peacock as his daughter Hadley is tucked into the couch watching a kid's show. But Doug is dropping "F" bombs, and every time Doug swears (which is a lot) Dave describes Hadley's head popping up like a prairie dog in alarm. That made me laugh out loud.The sober account of what has happened, what is going on now and what is to come in the West is sobering. He's done a great job of taking us on a tour, laying it out and asking us to think about it. There's lots to consider about ourselves as well as our country. A great job and a wonderful read.

Because I live in Utah, having transplanted here from back east, I have a natural affinity for both Stegner and Abbey before even opening this book. Gessner worships them both from a realistic but properly laudatory perspective. A worthwhile read.

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