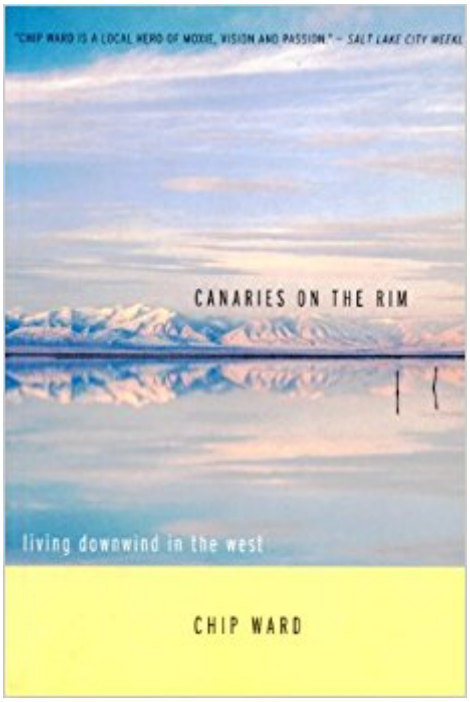
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Canaries On The Rim: Living Downwind In The West



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Synopsis

In the late 1970s Chip Ward and his wife left the Sleeping Rainbow Ranch in Capitol Reef National Park to raise their children in the classic small-town American setting of Grantsville, Utah. There, on the edge of the Great Basin Desert, disturbing tales of local sickness and death interrupted an idyllic life. A seven-year quest to understand a hidden history of ecocide followed. Canaries on the Rim is WardÃ¢â ¬â„¢s firsthand account of that quest and how lessons learned in the wilderness were later applied to building opposition to toxic waste disposal, chemical weapons incineration, industrial pollution, and nuclear waste storage. The secret holocaust that is unfolding along the toxic shadow of AmericaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Great Basin Desert is grim, but WardÃ¢â ¬â„¢s colorful and often-humorous story is not. Canaries on the Rim is a warning and a call to arms, but it is also a compelling drama and a lively primer on environmental activism. If civil action took place in Edward AbbeyÃ¢â ¬â„¢s West, this is the book that would result.

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Customer Reviews

The deserts of the world are the birthplaces of great religions, the inspirations for sublime expressions of art and feeling, the treasure houses of exotic beauty and remarkable forms of life. They are also the junkyards of industrial civilization, the resting place for abandoned cars, scrapped airplanes--and a vast array of toxic wastes, nuclear and chemical. Chip Ward came to one of the planet’s most unforgiving deserts, the flat salt pans west of Salt Lake City, Utah, to drive a

bookmobile. He has emerged from it, years later, as a spokesman for that forbidding landscape, the repository of decaying plutonium, retired biochemical weapons, and other manifestations of what he calls the "ecocidal schemes" of big business and government. Ward, working with other concerned Utah citizens, has been fighting an uphill battle not only to remove such threatening substances from desert dumps, but also to prevent new lethal trash from being hauled in from other parts of the country. That struggle has not been universally popular among his fellow desert dwellers: while across the country voters have rejected plans for proposed toxic-waste incinerators for toxic wastes, in that part of Utah, he writes, "we had a tradition of trading environmental quality for jobs and revenue"--and there is, he acknowledges, money to be made in lethal detritus, from which substantial fortunes have been born. Ward documents his group’s efforts to clean up their corner of the American desert, a quest that took him into the halls of Congress and before voters across the country. The struggle is ongoing, with no end in sight. He pleads his cause in the pages of Canaries on the Rim to good effect. Above all, he emphasizes that the desert should no longer be seen as a wasteland fit only for hiding our mess. "It is not desolate at all," he insists. "Desolation is what we have carried to it." --Gregory McNamee --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In his ardent memoir, Ward, who has fought for the health of the Great Basin Desert, tells the story of his awakening as an environmentalist. He had been living a quiet family life in Grantsville, Utah, in the late 1970s when he began to suspect that the various industries in the region, including a magnesium refinery that expelled the rancid smell of chlorine and an army depot that demolished old weapons, were polluting the region. His community, he realized, risked becoming a new generation of downwinders (named after those who became ill after living downwind of nuclear testing). "We knew that the more you look for something, the more you see it, until it looms large in your perspective," he writes. "But when you realize that there is cancer in every third house you pass, the evidence becomes compelling." Once he recognized the relationship between environmental and human health (which he refers to as "the gospel of eco-human-health"), he had no choice but to act. Ward’s ode to the intricate desert and the planet’s interconnectedness, following writers like Edward Abbey and Terry Tempest Williams, sets up a fast-paced account of Utah’s betrayal by the military, the turn-the-other-cheek attitude of state regulators, the blind eye of corporate hardball and the steadfast labor of whistleblowers and citizens forced to step up and take action. Though Ward attempts to put himself on a middle ground, his sometimes bitter attacks on the people and systems he’s worked with can come off as a bit wild-eyed. Nonetheless, this call to

clipboards for local activism is both hopeful and damning: a gift to the next generation and a warning that, in the end, there is no upwind. (Jan.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Look....this book is more important than 99.99% of all the books listed on , but only 7 people before me have rated it....And it is probably one of a handful of THE most important books that any of us will ever read, yet I'm just the 8th person on to review it. What does this tell you (or all of us) about this world we live in?

This is not a perfect book...but it is a book you need to read. "Canaries on the Rim" is an eye-opening look at the sad environmental state of the American West, and at the health hazards that constantly threaten the West's people: nerve gas incinerators, the lingering effects of atomic testing, chemical weapons manufacturers, air and water pollution, grazing abuse, and more.Every chapter of the book could stand alone as an article on a certain facet of this huge problem, and together the chapters paint a compelling picture of an environmental disaster and the ways to help fight it, ways Chip Ward has tested out personally.Chip Ward's information is not always accurate--for instance in his chapter on cattle in the West he states that most cattle ranchers in the West are owned by "big operations that function as tax-sheltering investments for even bigger corporations," when in reality small family grazing outfits exist all across Utah and the West. He also repeatedly says that cattle operations have a hard time in the West due to the West's harsh environment, when in reality the biggest enemy of the Western cattle industry has been the government's restrictions on grazing. And he never addresses what would be so much better than raising cattle out at home on the range. ...Cramped feedlots?Aside from that chapter, his information seemed mostly trustworthy though, almost always interesting, and always food for thought. The book was well-written (though troubled by weird capitalization), often entertaining, and made me want to read his second book, which I just found out about.If you live in the West, I highly suggest you read this. No matter where you live, if you care about what you eat and breathe and drink, I suggest you read this. It will make you consider what more you could be doing for our world, and it will make you feel as if there's something you can do.Because there is.Chip Ward has proved it.

When you enter Utah, the Billboards don't tell you that you've entered the largest environmental sacrifice zone in the country. You have to read Canaries on the Rim: Living Downwind in the West to find that out. Ward details what the Army and other government officials are afraid to tell you. He

documents the environmental ecocide that has taken place in the once pristine deserts of the Great American West from decades of uncontrolled military experiments and unregulated industrial pollution.In his book, Ward describes the attitude and mindset of the people who live in one of the most beautiful, yet most polluted states in America, and the polluters who take advantage of their trust. Home to the largest stockpile of chemical weapons in the world, the only nerve gas incinerator in the country, and the largest industrial polluter in America (MagCorps), the people of Utah have been subjected to environmental conditions that boggle the mind.From atomic testing in the 50's, to open-air biological and nerve agent testing in the 60's, to uncontrolled industrial pollution in the 70's, to the MX missle crisis in the 80's, to chemical weapons incineration in the 90's, the reasons for the skyrocketing rate of chronic illness are not hard to track down.Ward gives a colorful first hand account of his efforts to uncover the deceipt, corruption, and cover-ups that have plagued the people of Utah. Canaries on the Rim is a humerous tale of the darkness that has compromised the lives and health of Utahns. This is a must read for all Americans, especially those living in the intermountain west.

I know this book has gotten lots of great reviews, which is why I added it to my atomic/radiation/Downwinder collection.But after reading several others before it, it seemed trite.I was glad to be done with it.

The book was highlighted and underlined. Highlighting stops the reader from reading continuously. I sent it back to the seller because it was not in the "very good" condition. The book itself which I have read several years ago was very well written and describes the exposure to all kinds of testing the population east of Nevada was exposed to.

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