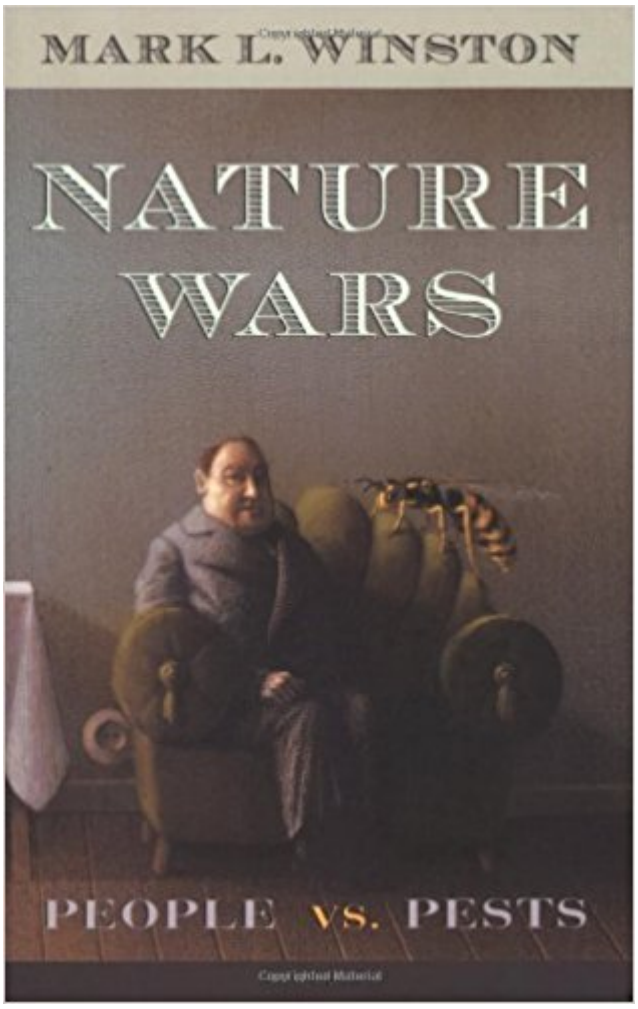
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Nature Wars: People Vs. Pests



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Synopsis

On our side, a vast arsenal of chemical pesticides. On their side? They don't have a side, the pests who must do nature's bidding. This is our war, and should we win it, ours would be a sorry planet. With disturbing news from the front, Nature Wars sounds the alarm against our dangerous tactics for controlling the pests that are an annoying but integral part of our world. Thirty years after Silent Spring woke us to the devastation wrought by DDT, chemical pesticides are as pervasive as ever, deployed at a rate of 4 pounds a year for every man, woman, and child in this country. This ongoing commitment to pesticides, Mark Winston argues, reflects our sense of place in nature: embattled, beleaguered, driven to aggression. His book, as sensible as it is wise, seeks to change this mindset, to show how a more measured and discriminating approach to pests, one based on management rather than eradication, might serve us and the natural world far better than our ill-fated all-out war. Winston backs up this approach with a full battery of case studies that take us from lawns and kitchens to farms and orchards, from insects and weeds to rats and coyotes. Here we see the complex political, biological, economic, social, and personal interactions that lie behind each pest management decision. Against this background Winston considers diverse instances of past pest management that reveal a consistent pattern of mistakes and problems--and lead to realistic, workable proposals for reducing pesticide use. A compelling book about ethics and choices, Nature Wars shows us the difference between protecting ourselves from real pests and poisoning ourselves and the planet. It turns us from our war on nature to our task as stewards of the environment.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It has been over 30 years since Rachel Carson's Silent Spring (LJ 9/15/62) sounded the alarm about the dangers of chemical pesticides. Now Winston (biology, Simon Fraser Univ.; Killer Bees, LJ 2/1/92) is issuing another wake-up call by showing how our battle against pests has become a war on nature. Winston provides case studies demonstrating alternative methods of pest control, explaining how political, social, economic, and biologic interactions behind pest-management decisions have contributed to our failure to replace toxic chemicals as our first method of choice. The author argues that we need to change our philosophy from eradication to control because we will not win the war. Winston has written a convincing and necessary book. Highly recommended for academic and public libraries.?Teresa Berry, Univ. of Tennessee Lib., KnoxvilleCopyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Call it a long shot, a miracle even, but Winston (The Biology of the Honey Bee, not reviewed) manages to shape the art and science of pest management into a fascinating subject. Pests eat our homes and crops and clothes, they transmit disease, they plague our skin, hair, and digestive tracts. They have bugged us from day one: The ancient Syrians exorcised scorpions from Antioch, Sumerians deployed elemental sulphur to control mites, and the Romans drained swamps to oust mosquitoes and their ilk. Today chemicals--pesticides, herbicides, fungicides--rule in humankind's ``modern war against nature,'' in which insects are a prime enemy. And, Winston asserts, ``it is time to reconsider the terms of engagement.'' Why? Because chemicals attack a pest's nervous system, which (unfortunately) resembles our own rather closely. The consequences: The author cites one million cases, worldwide, of human pesticide poisoning annually (and 20,000 fatalities among those). Moreover, pest resistance to chemicals is growing even as the chemicals continue to decimate natural predator populations essential to the earth's balance. Winston suggests various remedies for our faulty attitudes and strategies. He challenges and critiques our assumptions about pests, too: Does that single cockroach scuttling around the kitchen really demand an application of Malathion, or does our paranoia deserve some doctoring? As alternatives to dangerous chemical weapons, he proposes biologically based programs that consider (and benignly maneuver) the facts of insect ecology and behavior: sterile insect release, pheromone spraying, and genetic engineering. Winston recommends that chemical pesticides can be used, but only as a last resort; that pest management should indeed manage--but not eradicate- -pests; and that perhaps only the

most damaging pests should be managed at all. Like a new Rachel Carson for the new millennium, Winston delivers a nontoxic dose of much-needed common sense. -- Copyright Ã Â©1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This was an even handed, well researched, and completely fascinating discussion of the complexities of pest management. It is a book any well educated adult should read. These are issues that affect us all and we need to understand them in enough depth to make sound decisions. The book is well written and interesting. The level of detail is excellent especially for a well informed adult who isn't immersed in this field but wants to have a better understanding of these issues. I particularly like that the author doesn't try to sell you one particular solution, but rather presents the issues and lets you come to your own conclusions. I love reading good books for the lay public on science topics and have found it is the rare scientist that is able to respect the integrity of his or her field while providing a captivating read for those outside it. This is a well written book--highly recommended!

Since 1962, when Rachel Carson published her seminal work, Silent Spring, nothing much has changed in our practice of pest control. Carson had advocated that the methods we employ for pest control must be such that they do not destroy us along with the insects. Yet today, despite the lip service we pay to Silent Spring, and in spite of considerable environmental protest, public outcry and the availability of viable alternatives, we still choose to spray chemical pesticides at an alarming rate. In fact, chemical pesticides still remain our pest control method of choice.Our attitude is to approach pests as organisms to control rather than manage; we exterminate instead of reduce; we dominate rather than learn to accommodate. Why this sad state of affairs remains so is a central theme of this book, which introduces the concept of pest management (as opposed to pest control). Pest management forces us to look beyond the immediate benefits and disadvantages, costs and side effects, of pest control methods towards choosing alternatives that are more environmentally compatible and less harmful to our own health. The author explores scientifically exciting alternative technologies such as biological control, yet admits, as the 1990 gypsy moth invasion of Vancouver has shown, that the public needs more education and assurance on its safety and environmental correctness.This book provides such an education and forms the basis for novel biologically based strategies involving pheromones, parasitic insects, bio-engineered crops and pest diseases to become standard practice.Mark L. Winston is professor of biological sciences at Simon Fraser

University in British Columbia, Canada. He is the author of two previous books, The Biology of the Honey Bee and Killer Bees.

I found this book to be a very good introduction to the issues surrounding control of pests. It uses cases histories such as attempts to control the gypsy and codling moths to introduce not only the biological and environmental issues but also the political influences on decisions to control pests. It's quite readable. Anyone familiar with Silent Spring will enjoy this book.

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