Introduction to the Turkish Edition

Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* is a small book that has had a large influence. Since it was first published in 1949, it has changed the way millions of Americans think about their relationship to the land, to the natural systems in which we are all embedded, and to the Earth itself. In doing so, it has also changed the way we think about our relationships to one another as fellow citizens and dwellers in the land.

Over the decades the *Almanac* has gained a growing audience outside the United States. Leopold's words are increasingly being shared across political and cultural boundaries, with readers who are far from the places and experiences that Leopold described with such caring attention. Still, people everywhere find themselves connecting with Leopold's fundamental conviction: that as we better appreciate the beauty, drama, and diversity of the world around us, we come to a deeper understanding of ourselves, our historical circumstances, and our shared destiny. We come to acknowledge that our fate as humans is bound up with the fate of the plants and animals, the soils and waters, the atmosphere and oceans that constitute our earthly home.

That Aldo Leopold has been able to speak meaningfully to so many readers, from so many different backgrounds, for so long, testifies to the universality of his literary style, his insight, his convictions, and his message. Leopold expressed his scientific knowledge through a poet's pen. He was boundlessly interested in the ways nature worked, deeply curious about...
its small details and its large patterns, and endlessly intrigued by its everyday wonders and its great mysteries. He learned from his own experience—and most especially from his own mistakes. He believed that our human relationship to nature reaches far beyond the merely material and economic; that, as he once wrote, “in this respect our present culture... is false, ignoble, and self-destructive.” He proposed that, to sustain ourselves, our places, and our “fellow-voyagers... in the odyssey of evolution,” humanity must come to a new ethic, one that recognized humans as part of the larger community of life.

These qualities and concepts came to Leopold over a lifetime, and across a forty-year career as a professional forester, wildlife ecologist, land manager, farmer, professor, conservation advocate, policy-maker, and writer. A son of the American Midwest, he grew up in a period of rampant exploitation of the continent’s soils, waters, forests, fisheries, and wildlife. He came to maturity as the American conservation movement gained traction in the early 1900s. He was among the first Americans to be trained in forestry and later helped to establish the entirely new field of wildlife ecology and management. Along the way he became a leading champion for the preservation of America’s wild landscapes, and a proponent of what we now call sustainable agriculture. He pioneered the radical idea of ecological restoration—of actively repairing damaged and degraded ecological communities. In his writing and thinking, he challenged his fellow conservationists and fellow citizens to think more deeply about conservation’s philosophical foundations: to reject a strict and short-term utilitarianism; to extend conservation’s reach beyond just the scenic, the special, and the economically privileged; to find some workable reconciliation of our human need to use nature and our human capacity to love and respect nature.

Aldo and his wife Estella also raised five remarkable children who became prominent scientists and conservationists themselves. A turning point in their lives came in 1935, when Leopold acquired the modest acreage of worn-out Wisconsin farmland that became the focus of the family’s outdoor life and the setting for the early essays in A Sand County Almanac. This was hardly a naturalist’s Eden; years of hard farming of the poor soils had brought it to ruin. Together the family sought to understand the workings of the land and to restore its ecological diversity and health.

Out of this place and experience came Leopold’s new lyrical writing style, and his focused expression of a land ethic to help guide us in our membership within the larger ecological community. “We abuse land,” he writes in the Almanac’s introduction, “because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.” Leopold, however, understood that such an ethic, if it is to have meaning in the world, cannot be the lone expression of a single individual. As he himself notes in “The Land Ethic,” “nothing so important as an ethic is ever written.... [I]t evolve[s] in the minds of a thinking community.”

That thinking and caring community now reaches around the world. This edition becomes the latest in a series of translations that have allowed Leopold’s words to connect with readers far from the “sand counties” of central Wisconsin. And Leopold’s voice is not alone. A chorus is now swelling, bringing together voices from varied backgrounds, places, and traditions, each with essential contributions to make to an emerging Earth ethic. For those of us who carry forward Leopold’s work in his own home country, our fondest hope is that this edition may encourage more voices of Turkey to share your knowledge and.
love of the natural world, and your expressions of commitment
to the well-being of the land and of future generations.

Together we face critical social, economic, and environmental
challenges. Meeting them will require that we connect, that
we listen with respect, that we learn, and that we change. As
demanding as this reality is, it would be even more daunting if
we did not have the wisdom of our forebears to guide us. Three
generations ago Aldo Leopold wrote, “When we change ideas
about what land is for, we change ideas about what anything is
for.” History demonstrates that change rarely comes easily; but
it also shows that nothing can stop change when it is ready to
come. In *A Sand County Almanac*, Aldo Leopold calls us to
change. But he also calls us to celebrate the present, to revel in
the songs of rivers and the stateliness of pines, the rattling call
of cranes and the migratory hegira of geese. It is for the sake
of these things, and their meaning to us, that we are challenged
to change.

Dr. Curt Meine
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