

Book Review

Title	: <i>Wild Fell: Fighting for Nature on a Lake District Hill Farm</i>
Author	: Lee Schofield
Publisher	: Random House
Year	: 2022
Pages	: 368
Price	: \$ 22.99

Within the pages of *Wild Fell: Fighting for Nature on a Lake District Hill Farm*, Lee Schofield, chronicles his unwavering dedication to the restoration of wilderness in the form of life writing. Lee Schofield is an ecologist and site manager for RSPB Haweswater. His qualifications and dedication position him as someone with expertise and passion to make a positive impact on the natural world. His involvement is rooted in a deep understanding of ecosystems, environmental processes, and the consequences of human actions on the land. Further, the narrative details author's travels, encounters with individuals, literatures and engagements with diverse landscapes. In the heart of the Lake District's contested terrain, change is met with ambivalence as the delicate balance between rewilding and cherished farming traditions is carefully navigated. Schofield's account delves beyond the triumphant narrative of nature's resurgence. It delves into his own personal connection to the land and the emotional terrain of working tirelessly to protect it amidst ardent opposition.

The book unfolds across three distinct parts, encompassing eighteen chapters, meticulously guiding through Schofield's journey. The map of Haweswater in the book serves as a parallel visual guide to his narrative, enhancing the reader's understanding of the landscapes and locations integral to his story. The author invokes Wordsworth's verses at the beginning of each part. As Wordsworth is a quintessential figure who celebrated the landscape of the Lake District in his verses, he becomes a guiding

spirit who infuses the narrative with a sense of continuity, reverence and connection to the land. Through intricate narratives that traverse to lost ecosystems, the book illuminates the tapestry of flora and fauna that once thrived in the region.

His evocative description like: “our hills are just a great blank space, haunted by the shadows of vanished creatures” (Schofield 2022), paints a vivid portrait of the absence of biodiversity and the haunting imprint of species lost to time. The phrase encapsulates the profound impact of human activities on the environment, leaving behind a void that echoes with the memories of creatures that once roamed the land. Besides, the heartbeat of this narrative resonates with the mission to resurrect the indigenous golden eagle – a sentinel of the food chain that symbolizes ecological equilibrium. The tapestry woven through *Wild Fell*, extends beyond the present, embracing the future with hope. While the fruits of these labours remain elusive, the book culminates in visionary moments of the author, like the reclamation of forest, the soaring of eagles. These visions demonstrate author’s undying commitment.

Further, informed by the tapestry of local lore, historical remnants, and the people who have etched their lives upon the land, Schofield and his devoted team undertake a transformative endeavour. They mend the fabric of the landscape, one thread at a time, reweaving damaged wetlands, meadows, and woods. With each passing year, the wilderness reclaims its voice, growing richer, wilder, and more resilient, poised to withstand the tremors of an ever-changing climate.

On the other hand, the totality of Schofield’s *Wild Fell* profoundly echoes how: “nobody wants to hear an outsider suggesting that their way of life needs to change” (Schofield 2022, 171). This observation captures the universal truth about change proposed by an outsider. The change that can evoke resistance and apprehension. Being an outsider himself, he presents the additional efforts that demands sensitivity to the cultural, historical, economical and emotional ties that the natives hold with the land. Schofield’s role challenges the conventional notion of a dominant outsider. His statement: “becoming part of this sprawling, complicated, beautiful, troubled landscape is an honour” (Schofield 2022, 17) encapsulates a profound sense of connection, reverence, and responsibility toward the natural world he seeks to restore. His collaborative approach, integration of local farming methods, and incorporation of traditional views challenge the narrative of outsiders imposing their ideals. This underscores the narrative of partnership rather than domination of the landscape and

humans.

Further, his role as an outsider functioning under an organization aligns with the concept of environmental stewardship, which “refers to responsible use and protection of the natural environment through conservation and sustainable practices” (Walton n.d). And the participants can range from individuals and small groups of non-profit organizations, federal agencies and various collective networks. His acknowledgement of the significance of local knowledge and his willingness to learn challenges the notion of arrogance or control.

Also, Schofield’s narrative transcends the dichotomies of dominance and exploitation. “The generation of work that went into incrementally modifying Swindale deserves respect” (Schofield 2022, 222), encapsulate a profound acknowledgement of the industrious spirit and ingenuity of the people who transformed the land to meet their needs. Schofield’s words are a testament to the complexity of human interactions with the environment – a recognition that every alteration, every modification, was a response to the demands and challenges of their time. The words evoke a sense of continuity, humility, and the importance of considering historical and societal contexts when assessing human impact on the environment. Further, it conveys a sense of responsibility – a recognition that the modifications of the landscape undertaken by him and his colleagues carry echoes of the past and reverberate into the future.

His journey to restore the landscape endorses ecological friendly masculine qualities – a figure that nurtures, collaborates, and respects, which challenges traditional male traits, like aggression, social dominance, and lack of consideration for others (Cunnell 2017). Also, Schofield’s assertion in the book’s introduction, “I’m one of many tending to the land as best I can to nurture its wildlife, to help it function better and undo some of the damage that we humans have inflicted on it over the centuries” (Schofield 2022) epitomizes a nurturing attitude towards the environment. This sentiment aligns with Pule’s dissertation, which contends that men are endowed with an infinite capacity to care and nurture. His endeavours to revive and care for the landscape cast him as a living embodiment of the nurturing qualities expounded by Pule in his dissertation, “All men are born good and have an infinite capacity to care and be caring” (Pule 2013)

The narrative serves as a poignant reminder that ecological restoration is a collaborative symphony – a symphony in which countless individuals contribute their harmonious notes to create a world where humanity and

the wild can coexist in harmony. Further, he asserts that Farmers, land-owners, government bodies, businesses, and the compassionate hearts of those who care must work together. His acknowledgment that “no one person can bring that perfect world into being” (Schofield 2022, 76) illustrates the essence of addressing climate and biodiversity crises.

Overall, *Wild Fell* beckons us to recognize the potential for transformation that lies at our feet – within the petals of flowers – and challenges us to reimagine a world where landscapes, once devastated, flourish again. For within a landscape of flowers, a landscape of hope takes root. In a world marred by the ‘era of global boiling’ (Bisset 2023), this narrative stands as a testament to the human spirit’s unceasing quest to mend what has been broken, to restore what has been lost, and to nurture the fragile balance between humanity and the wilderness.

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