



# Our Natural History: The Lessons of Lewis and Clark

*Daniel Botkin*

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Often referred to as America's national epic of exploration, the 28-month Lewis and Clark expedition was certainly America's greatest odyssey. Commissioned in 1804 by Thomas Jefferson, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark set off on the greatest wilderness trip ever recorded. Beginning in St. Louis, they navigated up the Missouri River and through the prairies, enduring a winter with the Mandan Indians in North Dakota, reaching the summit of the Rocky Mountains and then following the Columbia River to their final destination, the Pacific Ocean.

Trained in natural history and in the methods of collecting plant and animal samples, Lewis and Clark carefully and meticulously recorded the conditions of the rivers, prairies, forests, mountains, and wildlife of pre-industrial America. Now, in this new edition of *Our Natural History*, Daniel B. Botkin, a distinguished botanist and naturalist, re-creates the grand journey--taking us on an exciting ecological adventure back to the landscape of the great American West. In retracing their steps, Botkin reveals what this western landscape actually looked like and how much it's been changed by modern civilization and technology. With fresh insight, Botkin shows us that from the explorers' observations, we can learn much about the environment of our past, our environment today, and what our environment might be in the future. Now with a new Afterword marking the 200th anniversary of the expedition, this timely and thought-provoking book captures our imagination and stimulates our sentiment with lessons about our environment and our place within it. *Our Natural History* offers a stunning and rare portrait of the rugged, beautiful, disappearing wilderness of the American West.

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