

"This book is vintage Hughes: pellucid prose, a clear sense of moral purpose, and stunning historical reach across several millennia and around the world. It is quite simply the best introduction to world environmental history yet written."

J. R. McNeill, Georgetown University, Washington DC; author of *Something new under the Sun: An Environmental History of the 20th-Century World*

"This slender book takes on the biggest theme facing humankind in the twenty-first century – the global environmental challenge that has been centuries in the making. The book is impressive in scope, clear and readable in prose, and compassionate."

Donald Worster, Hall Distinguished Professor of American History, University of Kansas, USA

"This is a lively account of Hughes first-hand experience of the cultures and nature of so many places and with so many original sources through time. This timely and well-written work will be of value both in teaching and for the scholar seeking gateways into different continents and times."

Dr. Verena Winiwarter, Institute for Anthropology, Vienna University

"In this scholarly work Donald Hughes harmonizes human history with the environment. He makes us realize that our community, in the deepest sense, is the community of life."

M. D. Subash Chandran, Dr. Baliga College, Kumta, India

The Environmental History of the World is a concise history, from ancient times to the present, of the interactions between humans and the other forms of life that inhabit the planet. Throughout their evolution, humans have affected the natural environment, sometimes with a promise of sustainable balance, but also in a destructive manner. This book investigates the ways in which environmental changes, often the result of human actions, have caused historical trends in human societies. This process has happened in every historical period and in every part of the inhabited earth.

The eight main chapters follow a chronological path through the history of mankind, in relationship to ecosystems around the world. Each chapter concentrates on a general period in human history, which has been characterised by large-scale changes in the relationship between human societies and the biosphere, and gives three case studies that illustrate the significant patterns occurring at that time. The chapters covering the twentieth century discuss the physical impact of the huge growth in population and technology, and the human responses to these problems. Our moral obligations to nature and how we can achieve a sustainable balance between technology and the environment are also considered.

This is an original work that reaches further than other environmental histories. Rather than looking at humans and the environment as separate entities, this book places humans within the community of life. The relationship between environmental thought and actions, and their evolution, is discussed throughout. Little environmental or historical knowledge is assumed from the reader in this introduction to environmental history.

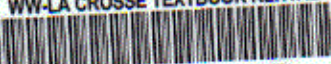
J. Donald Hughes is John Evans Professor in the Department of History, University of Denver, USA.

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