

AESS Interdisciplinary Environmental Studies and Sciences Series

Series editor

Wil Burns

Forum for Climate Engineering Assessment

School of International Service

American University

Washington, DC, USA

Environmental professionals and scholars need resources that can help them to resolve interdisciplinary issues intrinsic to environmental management, governance, and research. The AESS branded book series draws upon a range of disciplinary fields pertinent to addressing environmental issues, including the physical and biological sciences, social sciences, engineering, economics, sustainability planning, and public policy. The rising importance of the interdisciplinary approach is evident in the growth of interdisciplinary academic environmental programs, such as Environmental Studies and Sciences (ES&S), and related 'sustainability studies.'

The growth of interdisciplinary environmental education and professions, however, has yet to be accompanied by the complementary development of a vigorous and relevant interdisciplinary environmental literature. This series addresses this by publishing books and monographs grounded in interdisciplinary approaches to issues. It supports teaching and experiential learning in ES&S and sustainability studies programs, as well as those engaged in professional environmental occupations in both public and private sectors.

The series is designed to foster development of publications with clear and creative integration of the physical and biological sciences with other disciplines in the quest to address serious environmental problems. We will seek to subject submitted manuscripts to rigorous peer review by academics and professionals who share our interdisciplinary perspectives. The series will also be managed by an Editorial board of national and internationally recognized environmental academics and practitioners from a broad array of environmentally relevant disciplines who also embrace an interdisciplinary orientation.

More information about this series at <http://www.springer.com/series/13637>

Kimberly K. Smith

Exploring Environmental Ethics

An Introduction



Kimberly K. Smith
Carleton College
Northfield, MN, USA

ISSN 2509-9787 ISSN 2509-9795 (electronic)
AEISS Interdisciplinary Environmental Studies and Sciences Series
ISBN 978-3-319-77394-0 ISBN 978-3-319-77395-7 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77395-7>

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018934704

© Springer Science+Business Media, LLC, part of Springer Nature 2018

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are reserved by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Printed on acid-free paper

This Springer imprint is published by the registered company Springer Science+Business Media, LLC part of Springer Nature.

The registered company address is: 233 Spring Street, New York, NY 10013, U.S.A.

Preface

Exploring Environmental Ethics is just that: an exploration. It is not a typical scholarly monograph offering an ethical theory, nor is it a stand-alone textbook intended to serve as a comprehensive introduction to the field of environmental ethics for students of philosophy. It is instead an introduction to the discipline of environmental ethics for people outside of that field. Specifically, it is intended for students in interdisciplinary environmental studies programs who want to engage with the scholarly literature on environmental ethics but don't have training in philosophy.

I wrote this text to serve what I see as a growing need. As interdisciplinary environmental studies programs become more common in higher education, we need teaching materials that not only expose students to typical scholarship in different academic disciplines but also help *explain* different academic disciplines. We need texts that clarify disciplinary assumptions and methodologies, highlight important cross-disciplinary conversations, and discuss how terms may acquire different meanings as they migrate across fields. In short, we need texts that help us navigate the often confusing interdisciplinary landscape of environmental studies.

I come to this project not as a professional ethicist but as an intellectual historian whose primary field is political theory. From this vantage, standing just outside the field of ethics, I explore conversations among scholars of environmental ethics that are central to environmental studies as a field. Drawing on my experience teaching environmental ethics, I also discuss topics that are particularly important to environmental studies students but not typically addressed in standards texts on environmental ethics. My hope is that the book will serve as a map or guide, a resource that can help readers confidently to pursue their own explorations of this rich and important field.

In developing this book, I benefitted from conversations with and feedback from many people, including Dale Jamieson, Jennifer Everett, Jeremy Bendik-Keymer, the members of the 2009 NEH Workshop on Aldo Leopold, Glenn Adelson, Daniel Groll, Roger Jackson, Thabiti Willis, the anonymous reviewers at Springer, and the

many students in my Environmental Ethics courses. I am particularly grateful for the many conversations I have had with my mother, Judy Smith, who is the inspiration for the character of Judy K. I have tried to capture some of her wisdom about land management, stewardship, and the good life in this book.

Northfield, MN, USA

Kimberly K. Smith

Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Managing Spring Lakes	1
1.2	What This Book Is About	2
1.3	Ethics as Part of an Interdisciplinary Environmental Education	3
1.4	Overview of the Book	4
	Further Reading	5
2	Why Study Environmental Ethics?	7
2.1	The Problem of Purple Loosestrife	7
2.2	Why Ethics?	8
2.3	The Method of Ethical Inquiry	9
2.3.1	Ethical Inquiry Versus Scientific Inquiry	10
2.3.2	Empirical Versus Normative Study of Values	12
2.4	A Brief Tour of Metaethics	14
2.4.1	Moral Objectivism	14
2.4.2	Moral Subjectivism	15
2.4.3	Pragmatism	16
2.4.4	Purple Loosestrife Revisited	17
2.5	Why Environmental Ethics?	18
2.6	Schools of Environmental Ethics	19
2.6.1	Deep Ecology	20
2.6.2	Ecofeminism	20
2.7	Ethics and Social Change	21
	Further Reading	22
3	Justice and Political Duties	23
3.1	The Problem of Pond Maintenance	23
3.2	Two Theories of Justice	24
3.3	The Social Contract and the Limits of Government	26
3.4	Distributive, Procedural, and Structural Justice	28
3.5	Pond Maintenance Revisited	31
3.6	Duties of Government	31

3.7	Duties of Citizens	34
3.7.1	Restorative Justice	34
3.7.2	Ecological Citizenship	35
3.7.3	Citizenship and Global Environmental Problems	36
3.8	Duties of Corporations	37
3.9	Spring Lakes, Inc.	38
	Further Reading	39
4	Do We Have Duties to Nonhumans?	41
4.1	The Deer Problem	41
4.2	Defining the Moral Community	42
4.2.1	Value Theory	42
4.2.2	Living Humans	43
4.2.3	Nonhuman Animals	44
4.2.4	All Living Things	45
4.2.5	Pluralist-Expressivist Value Theory	47
4.2.6	Species	51
4.2.7	Ecosystems	53
4.3	The Deer Problem Revisited	55
	Further Reading	56
5	Do We Have Duties to Future Generations?	57
5.1	The Future of Spring Lakes	57
5.2	Future Generations	58
5.3	Future Generations and Public Policy	59
5.3.1	Ethics and Discounting in Climate Policy	60
5.3.2	Population Control	62
5.4	The Future of Spring Lakes Revisited	65
	Further Reading	65
6	Property and Stewardship	67
6.1	The Problem of Sand Mining	67
6.2	Property Rights	68
6.2.1	What Is a Property Right?	68
6.2.2	Property Rights and Freedom in the United States	70
6.2.3	Property Rights and Environmental Protection	70
6.2.4	Community Interests in Private Property	72
6.3	Stewardship and the Good Life	73
6.4	The Problem of Sand Mining Revisited	75
	Further Reading	76
7	Valuing Landscapes	77
7.1	The Problem of the Diseased Oaks	77
7.2	Landscape and Meaning	78
7.3	The Value of Wilderness	80
7.4	The Value of Biodiversity	82
7.5	Aesthetics and Ecology	83

7.6 Landscapes and Injustice 85

7.7 The Problem of the Diseased Oaks Revisited 87

Further Reading 88

8 Stewardship as a Vocation 89

8.1 The Problem of Stewarding Spring Lakes 89

8.2 The Concept of Vocation 90

8.3 Consumerism 91

8.4 Environmental Ethics on the Job 91

8.5 Environmental Ethics in College 93

8.6 Moral Ecologies 94

8.7 Politics as a Vocation? 94

8.8 Stewarding Spring Lakes Revisited 95

Further Reading 96

Index 97