

Book Review: Coyotes and Town Dogs

Timothy Bechtold

Summer/Fall 1993

Coyotes and Town Dogs by Susan Zakin. Viking Press, \$23.50. Many pages. Bow-wow-wow.

When the Journal was published in Missoula, the office used to receive all kinds of free books from publishers who were eager to get a review in print for free publicity. Just before the Journal hit Eugene, a copy of *Coyotes and Town Dogs*, by Susan Zakin, arrived. Jake immediately nabbed it for his own under the pretense of writing a review for the Journal. I guess the staff believed that he would write a review, but that was presupposing that Jake would actually read the book, or could actually read the book.

Jake left it lying around one night, so I grabbed it from him, since it said on the book jacket that it was the history of Earth First!. So, the first thing I did was look in the index to see if I was mentioned. Nope. Oh well, so much for my place in history. Then I looked for Bill. Nope. Bikini. Nope. At least Jake or MB or Phil Knight. Nope. Well, how about Sidewinder and Steele and Hammer and Joe Woodelf or anybody else? Uh... nope. (Luckily, Howie gets mentioned a bunch, so the Wild Rockies gets some ink, and Marilyn gets mentioned, though I'm not sure it is in a nice way.) About then I started to wonder if the book had anything to do with Earth First! at all.

Turns out the part about Earth First! on the book jacket is just there to get people's attention. The book is about Earth First! about the same way that FORPLAN is about integrated resource management.⁽¹⁾ With FORPLAN, timber is the constraint, and all the other values are considered according to their effect on timber. In Zakin's book, Dave Foreman is the constraint, and everybody else is measured and mentioned according to how they play off Dave or affect Dave. I guess that's fine, but that sure is not the way they are marketing the book. But then again, that is not the way FORPLAN is marketed either.

Zakin tells a lot of penis and beer barrel stories, if that is what you prefer. I found them alternately pitiful and tedious. There are a lot of stories about those heady days of youth, when wine, women, wilderness protection, and song were there to be had at will by hirsute men of strength and bulk. Perhaps you may prefer this sort of thing as well, but, then, perhaps you may prefer this sort of book.—*Timothy Bechtold*

⁽¹⁾ FORPLAN serves "... to protect the Forest Service from its enemies... FORPLAN also is a formidable roadblock to gaining leverage to push the national forests in any direction other than the one they wish to go... fear exists that those on the outside will not understand the key analytical pressure points that control the solution and... even if they could figure out the key assumptions, the national forests could reconstrain the model to obtain the answer... thus FORPLAN ... represents a formidable way for the national forests to insulate themselves from the critics...". — NORMAN JOHNSON (author of FORPLAN)

The Ted K Archive

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Wild Rockies Review, Vol. 6, no. 2, page 14. <www.environmentandsociety.org/sites/default/files/key_docs/wild_rockies-ef_vol6-no2.pdf>

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