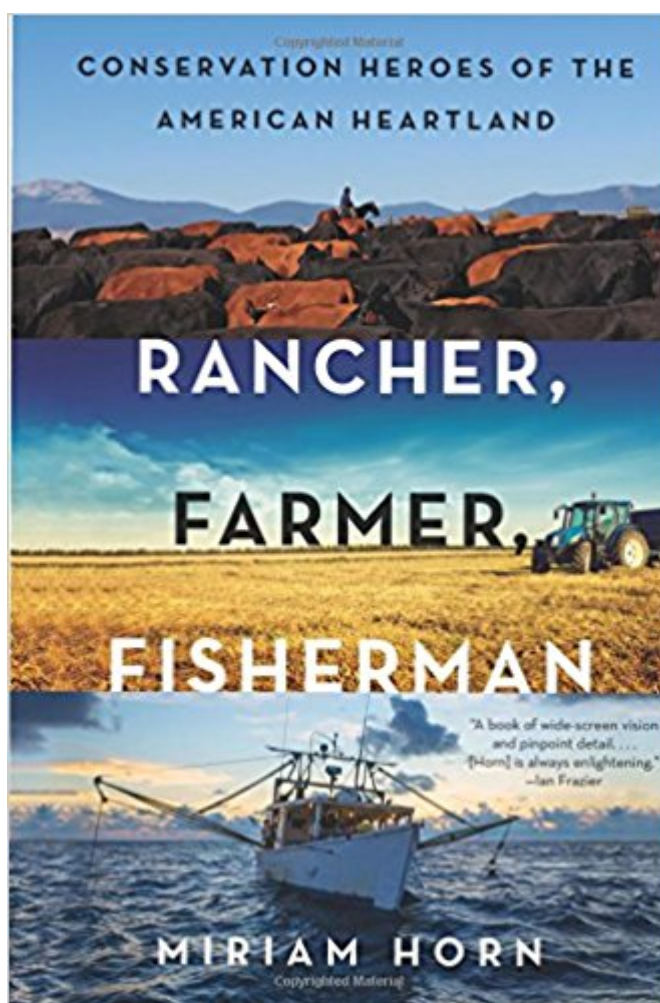




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Rancher, Farmer, Fisherman: Conservation Heroes Of The American Heartland



Synopsis

Now a feature-length documentary on the Discovery channel narrated by Tom Brokaw.

“Lush, gorgeously written”
A profoundly hopeful book.
•
Tina Rosenberg, winner of the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award
A Kirkus Best Book of 2016
Many of the men and women doing today’s most consequential environmental work
restoring America’s grasslands, wildlife, soil, rivers, wetlands, and oceans
would not call themselves environmentalists; they would be too uneasy with the connotations of that word. What drives them is their deep love of the land: the iconic terrain where explorers and cowboys, pioneers and riverboat captains forged the American identity. They feel a moral responsibility to preserve this heritage and natural wealth, to ensure that their families and communities will continue to thrive. Unfolding as a journey down the Mississippi River, Rancher, Farmer, Fisherman tells the stories of five representatives of this stewardship movement: a Montana rancher, a Kansas farmer, a Mississippi riverman, a Louisiana shrimper, and a Gulf fisherman. In exploring their work and family histories and the essential geographies they protect, Rancher, Farmer, Fisherman challenges pervasive and powerful myths about American and environmental values. 6 illustrations; 2 maps

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Customer Reviews

“Miriam Horn weaves a picture of hope from the stories of five Americans whose work places them on the front lines of conservation. Their compelling stories illuminate the complexity of the challenges posed by a changing climate, and teach that the solutions must be grounded in

humanity as well as in science. A marvelous and inspiring book. — Frederic C. Rich, author of *Getting to Green* — “The most powerful, compelling, and eloquent solutions for our problems come from the inside. In this lush, gorgeously written book, Miriam Horn shows men and women preserving the natural world around them — not out of an abstract sense of environmentalism, but because they love the land and water, their communities, and way of life. A profoundly hopeful book. — Tina Rosenberg, winner of the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award, co-founder of Solutions Journalism Network — “Rancher, Farmer, Fisherman showcases the people I consider the real unsung heroes of conservation in America: the landowners themselves. Successful conservation in this country requires leadership by the people closest to the land, not just regulators in Washington, D.C. — Miriam Horn — “Her book should be required reading for everyone who is concerned about how we will sustain American food production and help feed the world while protecting our limited land and water resources. — Howard G. Buffett, chairman and CEO of the Howard G. Buffett Foundation — “A book of wide-screen vision and pinpoint detail, cinched tight to the middle of the country. With understanding, skill, and passion, Miriam Horn tells the stories of men and women who wrest their living from a varied environment while working hard to preserve it. Her writing is always enlightening, often a delight. — Ian Frazier — “Refreshingly, in what could have been an extremely political title, Horn and her subjects go out of their way to illustrate how it is only through taking an apolitical and far-reaching view of environmental issues that true success can be found — interesting, even revolutionary ways to approach conservation issues. — Booklist (starred review) — “All of these valiant men and women, writes the author, are fiercely protective of the land and sea and its bounty not only because these delicately balanced ecosystems directly support their livelihoods, but because there is also an enduring love of the land itself and an allegiance to preserve it — An optimistic journal of promise for the future. — Kirkus (starred review) — “Horn’s intimate profiles reveal undervalued environmental change makers while countering popular notions of what it means to be a conservationist. — Publishers Weekly — “Horn’s prose flows with the river north to south — [A]n essential read — fascinating. — Library Journal

Miriam Horn is the author of two previous books, including the New York Times best-selling *Earth: The Sequel*. She works at Environmental Defense Fund and lives in New York City.

This is a well-written, engaging and ultimately somewhat frustrating book. Focused on

“case studies” of five charismatic people who are immersed in the virtuous work of trying to feed a hungry planet while acting as good stewards of the natural world, it demonstrates how it is sometimes possible to do good while doing well—or at least well enough. These individual portraits are interesting (if sometimes telling you more than you might want to know about family history) and the principal characters seem admirable in many ways. But what are we supposed to do with this information? I came to the end of the five portraits expecting to find a final chapter that would tie the disparate strands of the individual narratives together, spinning out common threads and suggesting some things that could be done, whether individually or collectively through government or organizations, to try to spread the benefits of these heroes’ experiences and insights. (The term “heroes” is not used ironically—they earned the label.) Instead, the book didn’t conclude, it just terminated. So, what’s the message here? Is there a theory of social change buried in the stories? For starters, it’s worth noting that finding five wonderful people out of the continental scale of the Mississippi River drainage is probably a lower per capita rate of righteous people than Lot could find in Sodom and Gomorrah. Is this book, then, a kind of environmental “Lives of the Saints” that depicts exemplary lives lived out in a sinful world in the hope that others will be inspired to follow their example? The protagonists certainly exhibit vision, tenacity, leadership and caring attributes that we would all be well advised to follow. But if that’s what we have to depend on to save the planet, then we’re in really deep trouble. On the other hand, it’s possible to read this book as a “don’t worry, be happy” celebration of the status quo. After all, with minimal support and encouragement, the five heroes have done good things for their communities and our common food supply, as well as for the environment and future generations. If we just stand aside, give them a pat on the back and a bit of applause, these change agents and other unsung colleagues like them should be able to take care of business. And perhaps their success will inspire others to follow them. Let’s go have a beer. The third implicit story line in these narratives is a bit more complex. At times, each of the five heroes faces constraints or obstacles in the form of unresponsive or resistant government agencies, opposing or indifferent NGOs or corporations, and individual people in the community who fight against the heroes’ visions, whether from ideological rigidity or desire to use the resources in a different way. As in most heroic tales, the heroes find ways to de-fuse or work around this opposition and build communities of trust and stewardship. A good part of their

success is respecting the rights of others in the community to have different views and to earn a living in the best way they can, as well as a big dose of patience, tenacity and humility. They also share an entrepreneurial drive to find better ways of reconciling the potential conflicts between ecology and economy. But it seems like there ought to be more that the society as a whole, or some parts of it, might do to ease the path toward collaborative stewardship, to make it possible for others who may have somewhat less talent or tenacity than these exceptional people to create similar action plans in other communities. In short, we need to find ways to make their work replicable, and scalable. Miriam Horn shouldn't be faulted for not writing a different book. What she has given us is a very good, very readable introduction to the issues, and a context for thinking about how we as a society produce and distribute food. Other writers have tried to take on the issue of how we can support social change through collaborative governance; but unfortunately, many of those books and articles are written in dense academic prose that no one outside of a university would consider a "good read." We can hope that a writer as talented as Miriam Horn will take on these kinds of issues for a broad audience.

I learned so much from this book, amazing.

As a Rancher myself I must say this Miriam Horn did a wonderful job bringing light to the deep seeded desire I have and I believe most Farmers and Ranchers have to care for and even regenerate our natural resources.

Through the Rancher, part way through the Farmer, so far an excellent book. Makes you think about the dimensions of the subjects. Read-- you will think--we all should...

A huge thank you to Miriam Horn for bringing these incredible stories to the world and an even bigger thank you to the heroes of our planet in this book.

A great book about ordinary people doing extraordinary things. Highly detailed, even-handed, and big-minded.

Awesome book, highly recommended for anyone.

Phenomenal & well written book!

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