The Ragged Edge of the World: Encounters at the Frontier Where Modernity, Wildlands and Indigenous Peoples Meet, 2012, 260 pages, Eugene Linden, 0452297745, 9780452297746, Plume, 2012

A species nearing extinction, a tribe losing the last traces of an accumulation of centuries of knowledge, a tract of forest virtually untouched since prehistoric times facing the first incursions of humans--how can we begin to assess the cost of the increasing disappearance of so much of our natural and cultural legacy? While these losses occasionally garner headlines, the pressures on earth's remaining wildlands and tribal peoples are unremitting and mounting. For forty years Eugene Linden has explored environmental issues in a series of critically acclaimed books and in articles for publications ranging from National Geographic and Time to Foreign Affairs. His diverse assignments have frequently taken him to the very sites where tradition, wild-lands and the various forces of modernity collide. In The Ragged Edge of the World, he recounts his adventures at this volatile frontier, where he has witnessed the dramatic transformations that follow in the wake of money, development and ideas as they make their way into the world's last wild places. Linden tells this story through encounters at this movable frontier. He takes us from Vietnam--where exciting new species are being discovered near the infamous Ho Chi Minh Trail--to New Guinea and Borneo; from pygmy forests to Machu Picchu; from the Antarctic, where the entire ecosystem is changing, to the Ndoki, long celebrated as the most pristine rainforest in the Congo, which, even though it now has protection, suffers impacts from the outside world as dust, a portent of an ominous drying, blows in from the north. Even in the face of so much harm, however, many efforts at preservation have succeeded, and Linden charts such pioneering projects as the protection of Midway Atoll's vast albatross colony and Cuba's vigilant guardianship of its spectacularly beautiful landscape. An elegy for what has been lost and a celebration of those cultures resilient enough to maintain their vibrancy and integrity, The Ragged Edge of the World captures the world at a turning point with a compelling immediacy that brings alive the people, animals and landscapes on the front lines, as change continues its remorseless march.--Publisher's description.

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