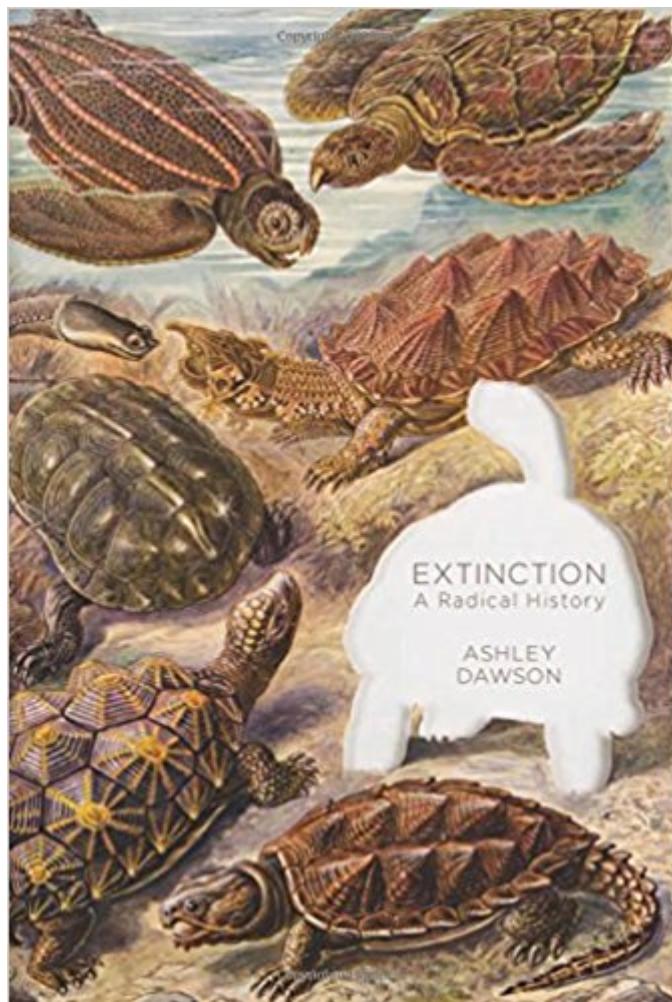


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Extinction: A Radical History



Synopsis

Some thousands of years ago, the world was home to an immense variety of large mammals. From wooly mammoths and saber-toothed tigers to giant ground sloths and armadillos the size of automobiles, these spectacular creatures roamed freely. Then human beings arrived. Devouring their way down the food chain as they spread across the planet, they began a process of voracious extinction that has continued to the present. Headlines today are made by the existential threat confronting remaining large animals such as rhinos and pandas. But the devastation summoned by humans extends to humbler realms of creatures including beetles, bats and butterflies. Researchers generally agree that the current extinction rate is nothing short of catastrophic. Currently the earth is losing about a hundred species every day. This relentless extinction, Ashley Dawson contends in a primer that combines vast scope with elegant precision, is the product of a global attack on the commons, the great trove of air, water, plants and creatures, as well as collectively created cultural forms such as language, that have been regarded traditionally as the inheritance of humanity as a whole. This attack has its genesis in the need for capital to expand relentlessly into all spheres of life. Extinction, Dawson argues, cannot be understood in isolation from a critique of our economic system. To achieve this we need to transgress the boundaries between science, environmentalism and radical politics. *Extinction: A Radical History* performs this task with both brio and brilliance.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Ashley Dawson is a professor of English at CUNY, New York City. He is the author of *Mongrel*

Nation and The Routledge Concise History of Twentieth-Century British Literature, as well as a short story in the anthology Staten Island Noir.

I have just read a long excerpt from this book on the website Longreads, but haven't read the book yet. The impact of the writing is devastating. I know world history pretty thoroughly, and have rarely or never encountered such stunning ecological histories of some of the societies I respect, including the Stone Age, the Sumerians and the Romans. Dawson shows how from the outset in the cave period, man systematically destroyed his environment in a quest for better living. He shows that farming, far from being a convenient shift, was a crisis-driven necessity following the extinction of large meat animals caused by massive overhunting. The very first government, in Sumer, institutionalized systems of oppression of the people, militarization and conquest of neighbors, and destruction of the environment, turning fertile lands into deserts, that still exist today. This came along with Sumerian contributions of the wheel and the basis of organized trade and record-keeping. Later the Romans and their highly efficient world system turned most of the lands they occupied into deserts. You will never look at history and humankind the same way again after reading this book.

Excellent book. Very concise, informative. If you are into conservationism and well, long term survival, this is a must read.

Chronicles the existence of humans from their earliest appearance and their depopulating the planet of animals after developing speech. From there comes society and development of commerce and then exploitation of natural resources which then causes animal species to disappear. Further on there is mention of reintroducing wolves back into Yellowstone and attempts to rebreed large currently extinct animals. Whiney. Includes B/W images.

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