



The RIVERKEEPERS: Two Activists Fight to Reclaim Our Environment as a Basic Human Right

By John Cronin, Robert Kennedy

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A modern-day David and Goliath tale, *The Riverkeepers* is an impassioned firsthand account by two advocates who have taken on powerful corporate and government polluters to win back the Hudson River. John Cronin and Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. tell us how we too can fight for our fundamental right to enjoy our invaluable natural resources.

Revealing shocking stories of commonplace environmental crime -- from drinking water tainted with hospital waste to fish populations contaminated by freely dumped PCBs -- Cronin and Kennedy describe their dramatic confrontations with more than ninety environmental lawbreakers. *The Riverkeepers* is a timely call to action that will resonate across America as the backlash spearheaded by congressional leaders and their major corporate allies threatens to reverse the hard-won victories in environmental law and policy.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

In the 1960s the Hudson River, under threat from polluters and energy concerns but beloved by its shoreline residents and local fishermen, became one of the United States' first major environmental battlegrounds. Out of those early legal wrangles emerged some important environmental legislation, and also the Soundkeeper organization, with a mandate to fight for the health of this historic New York river.

This book reveals something about the organization, and even more about the history of the Hudson and environmentalism in America, from John Winthrop to Newt Gingrich, and quite a bit, too, about the upbringings--glamorous (who'd have thought keeping a pet seal in your swimming pool would lead to activism?) and not-so-unusual--of its authors. Promising early chapters sketch out the exploitation of the river by industry and describe some of its colorful champions. (One of the most interesting here is Robert H. Boyle, the writer of a seminal account of the Hudson, *The Hudson River: A Natural and Unnatural History*, who comes off as a hero.) A terrific final section explains in accessible terms the basis for environmental law in the founding of our country. In between, this book sometimes falters under the weight of too much information. You can't fault these writers for the work they've done, or for the scattered gems of thoughtful information on the modern environmental movement, which make this book worth reading. Just be prepared to pick through some irrelevancies (did Bobby Shriver really bring a leopard tortoise home for Robert Kennedy Jr. from Kenya in a suitcase?) to get to the heart of this unusual book. --*Maria Dolan*

From Library Journal

Former Hudson River commercial fisherman Cronin became an environmental activist when he saw that his river was too polluted to fish and founded Riverkeepers, of which Kennedy is chief prosecuting attorney. Here they tell the story of Riverkeepers' battle against environmental offenders. Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Kirkus Reviews

Two leaders of the Hudson Riverkeeper organization, a New Yorkbased environmental advocacy group, recount their legal and public-relations battles against the polluters of one of America's famed waterways. Cronin, a former Hudson River commercial fisherman, and Kennedy, one of the new generation of that storied family, are, respectively, head and chief prosecuting attorney of the Hudson Riverkeeper group. The Hudson River, which had inspired artists and environmentalists such as Thomas Cole, Theodore Roosevelt, and John Burroughs, had become so polluted by the 1960s that swimming in its waters was forbidden. Cronin and Kennedy trace the grass-roots environmental activism that culminated in the formation of their organization in 1983. Since then, the group has filed close to 100 lawsuits, reportedly induced polluters to pay close to half a billion dollars to help restore the river, achieved a landmark agreement to protect New York City's water supply, and spawned a number of similar groups. The authors depict their enemies as numerous, well funded, and unscrupulous--including corporations such as Exxon and General Electric, as well as the "most antienvironmental Congress in the nation's history." Despite their self-righteous rhetoric, the authors outline three important ways to counter right-wing stereotypes about environmental elitism. First, they advocate acting locally. Second, they urge that environmentalism not be seen as anti-growth, but as a way to preserve a decades-old industry (fishing) and prevent long-term community blight by companies who pursue short-term strategies. Third, they see environmentalism as the ultimate struggle "against special interests who would monopolize, exclude, and liquidate [resources] for cash." While hardly objective, this manifesto sheds much light on how the modern environmental movement emerged at the local level and how

it is striving to deal with the current, more hostile political landscape. -- *Copyright ©1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Users Review

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