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**Review of *The Farm as Natural Habitat: Reconnecting Food
Systems with Ecosystems* Edited by Dana L. Jackson and Laura L.
Jackson**

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The Farm as Natural Habitat: Reconnecting Food Systems with Ecosystems. Edited by Dana L. Jackson and Laura L. Jackson. Washington, DC: Island Press, 2002. xii + 297 pp. Figures, maps, references, index. \$50.00 cloth, \$25.00 paper.

The Farm as Natural Habitat shows how wildlife need not be banished to distant parks but can and should be integrated into our farming systems.

Editors Dana and Laura Jackson have organized a delightful collection of eighteen essays, linked by insightful transitions, addressing “the connection between the grocery list and the endangered species list, between farms and nature.” A related theme concerns the “bullying notion” that holds the advance of industrial, habitat-destroying agriculture as inevitable.

Much of the argument against inevitability is woven from well-described examples of farms that also provide natural habitat for various wild species. Public policy is mentioned in several places, then given a more thorough treatment in the concluding chapter. One of the essays makes an eloquent, spiritual argument appealing to love of land, while another recounts the importance of consumers making informed decisions at the grocery store.

There is a clear, albeit unstated, theme throughout the book that a combination of informed farmers, thoughtful consumers, and enlightened public policy would be sufficient to bring about landscape-level change. It is here, I think, that more could be said. A complex, interconnected ecosystem appropriate for holistic management coexists with a relatively simple and naive economic system. The brief mention of “the powerful hold of industrial agriculture” only serves to make one want to know more about it. A chapter describing the role multinational agribusiness played in getting us where we are – and what corporations must do for the farming transformation to succeed—would have been a welcome addition.

The Farm as Natural Habitat lays out a grand scale challenge: “Many endangered species have requirements that simply cannot be met without drastic changes on a landscape scale.” Describing what is needed and showing what can be done by individual farmers provides a crucial first step toward meeting that challenge. We now await an equally ambitious treatment of the economic system in which these individuals must eat, live, and farm. Willard Cochrane’s *The Curse of Agricultural Abundance: A Sustainable Solution* (2003) makes an important move in this direction, but more remains to be done.

I cannot separate my respect for this book from my admiration for those who wrote it. I know many of the authors, have participated in the monitoring projects they describe, and have valued their support at many difficult times in my career. With this caveat, I heartily recommend *The Farm as Natural Habitat* to both ecologists and economists alike. **Richard A. Levins**, *Department of Applied Economics, Emeritus, University of Minnesota, St. Paul.*