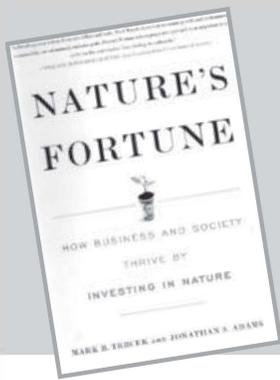


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“Nature’s Fortune: How Business and Society Thrive by Investing in Nature”

Mark Tercek, CEO of The Nature Conservancy and Jonathan Adams, science writer

Published in 2013 by Basic Books. ISBN-10: 0465031811. 272 pages. \$26.99

Mark Tercek, The Nature Conservancy's CEO, had worked at Goldman Sachs since 1984 and his last position was director of Goldman's relatively new Environmental Strategy Group, which worked to increase investments in sustainable energy. He was either very smart or simply lucky to have left his position at Goldman Sachs in 2008 to take over the reins of TNC, a mere two months before the economy tanked. The recession created a disaster for nonprofits, left to fend for themselves with fewer donations and huge reductions in asset values. Tercek's experience as an investment banker made him the perfect person to help TNC through some really tough times.

When I heard that Tercek had written this book, I pre-ordered a copy. The book's genesis came from a series of talks that he'd put together. Although Tercek brought in biologist and science writer Jonathan Adams to help him modify the content of the talks to add more detail and more science, the book is still written from Tercek's point of view.

In the introduction, Tercek writes: "Environmentalists generally believe in nature's inherent value. That idea is the bedrock of the environmental movement. However, environmentalists cannot persuade everyone to think along the same lines. Focusing only on the innate wonders of nature risks alienating potential supporters and limits the environmental community's ability to reach a broader audience and to mine sources of new ideas. The 'Isn't nature wonderful?' argument can leave the impression that nature offers solely aesthetic benefits or, worse, that nature is a luxury good that only rich people or rich countries can afford. We need to get business, government, and individuals to understand that nature is not only wonderful, it is also economically valuable. Indeed, nature is the fundamental underpinning to human well-being."

Being a banker, he adds: "...concepts such as maximize returns, invest in your assets, manage your risks, diversify, and promote innovation are the common parlance of business and banking. These are rarely applied to nature, but they should be."

The nine chapters cover a wide variety of topics, but each tells a series of stories covering one topic and most include personal anecdotes that make them very readable. I loved how Tercek related that during his first days on the job, he was at a town hall meeting and was drinking water from a plastic water bottle. The next day his coworkers had left a bunch of reusable bottles on his desk. He appreciated their thoughtfulness, but was also struck by the realization that environmentalists cannot

buy reusable water bottles for everyone. He said, "It seems as if that has been the retail strategy for saving nature: person by person, special place by special place. That will not be enough – not anymore. Making a difference means showing how nature matters to millions of people who may not have noticed it."

I'd recommend this book to environmentalists because it covers new territory in how a non-profit environmental organization can become much more effective by reaching out to new people who may not have noticed nature as an asset, and more importantly, by working with commercial enterprises that may have had large ugly environmental footprints. We may have to hold our noses because of past damage done, but if we can step off our soapboxes and get them to the table, then everyone can move forward to benefit the environment. Because their environmental footprints are large, even a small change could have a larger positive impact than a large change in a small footprint.

All movements toward green are beneficial, but we worry about "green-washing" where groups appear to be environmentally friendly, but may not be actually accomplishing much. This book provides useful examples of how to reach out to new audiences with good arguments for why they should consider nature as an asset and examples of how other groups have really made a difference. The book also shows that commercial and environmental interests are not in opposition, but can be partnered in ways we might not have thought about before. Read it for yourself.

To continue my outreach to state officials, I gave a copy of the book to my state senator, Rob Bradley, to impart the message that preserving Florida's environment is NOT anti-business. To read a post I wrote just after the elections on how I prepared to address the Clay County Delegation, which includes Bradley, before the legislative sessions began, visit <http://nativeplantwildlifegarden.com/supporting-wildlife-beyond-your-garden-gate/>

Author's note: I've been a Nature Conservancy member for many years and donated 50% of the royalties of my book "*Sustainable Gardening for Florida*" to the Florida branch of TNC. 🌱

Ginny Stibolt earned her MS in botany at the University of Maryland and has written *Sustainable Gardening for Florida* and *Organic Methods for Vegetable Gardening in Florida* – both published by University Press of Florida. In addition Ginny has been a lead blogger for FNPS since 2010.



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Editorial Content

We welcome articles on native plant species and related conservation topics, as well as high-quality botanical illustrations and photographs. Contact the editor for guidelines, deadlines and other information.

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The purpose of the Florida Native Plant Society is to conserve, preserve, and restore the native plants and native plant communities of Florida.

Official definition of native plant:

For most purposes, the phrase Florida native plant refers to those species occurring within the state boundaries prior to European contact, according to the best available scientific and historical documentation. More specifically, it includes those species understood as indigenous, occurring in natural associations in habitats that existed prior to significant human impacts and alterations of the landscape.

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