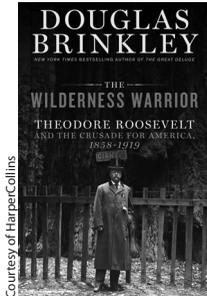


This book has value, but it should have been condensed into a more logical form. The redundant manner of presentation detracts from its logical flow of information, readability, and understandability.



New York:  
HarperCollins, 2009

940 pages

\$34.99

## ***The Wilderness Warrior: Theodore Roosevelt and the Crusade for America***

by Douglas Brinkley

**Reviewed by Dr. William P. Leeman**, Assistant Professor of History, Salve Regina University, and author of *The Long Road to Annapolis: The Founding of the Naval Academy and the Emerging American Republic*

Portraying Theodore Roosevelt as a “wilderness warrior” and employing military imagery to describe his environmentalism and crusade for conservation, Douglas Brinkley provides a detailed study of Roosevelt’s interaction with the natural world and his efforts to preserve it before and during his historic presidency. Brinkley’s Roosevelt is a great, if sometimes contradictory, champion of the American wilderness, obsessively striving to protect American wildlife while frequently indulging in big game hunting. Brinkley credits Roosevelt with launching the modern conservation movement in the United States and confirms his status as the nation’s first true environmental president.

The first 400 pages of the book examine Roosevelt’s encounters with nature and his early conservation efforts during the period before his rise to the presidency. As a child with health problems, young Roosevelt found comfort in the fresh air of the outdoors and quickly became a naturalist and wildlife enthusiast. A devoted disciple of Charles Darwin, Roosevelt first read Darwin’s classic work, *On the Origin of Species*, as a teenager and ultimately adopted Darwin’s theory of evolution through competition and struggle as his philosophy of life. Often advocating what he called “the strenuous life,” Roosevelt was convinced that true American manhood required an immersion in nature and the wilderness for ultimate fulfillment.

Perhaps the most formative experience for Roosevelt came in 1884 when, following the death of his wife and mother on the same day, Roosevelt temporarily abandoned his career in New York politics and moved west to the Dakota Territory to live a rancher’s life. This experience gave Roosevelt a new dimension to his character and public image—an elite and scholarly eastern politician, but also a frontier cowboy and big game sportsman. Roosevelt was equally comfortable in the aristocracy of New York society, the ultra-competitive world of New York politics, and the rough and pure masculine environment of the Dakota Badlands. Even his writings demonstrated this unique character. He was the author of a number of scholarly works on naval history and western expansion as well as ornithological studies, books on hunting, and accounts of his adventures in the Dakota Territory.

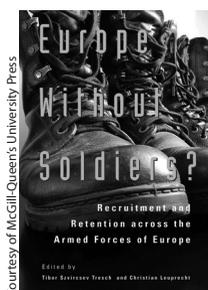
After completing his Dakota sojourn, Roosevelt continued to advance his political career, serving on the US Civil Service Commission, as police commissioner of New York City, and as assistant secretary of the navy. Roosevelt, in the words of naturalist John Burroughs, was a “live wire,” full of energy and enthusiasm on a wide range of subjects including politics, urban reform, civil service, military affairs, conservation, history, and wildlife. Roosevelt was the force behind the establishment of the Bronx Zoo and used his social Darwinist theories to justify the Spanish-American War. Resigning his position at the Navy Department to become colonel of the Rough Riders, a volunteer cavalry unit, Roosevelt used his military service in Cuba to continue his observations in ornithology and natural history. Capitalizing on his wartime fame, Roosevelt was elected governor of New York in 1898. As governor, he sought scientific solutions to environmental problems, strictly enforced fish and hunting laws, incorporated geography and natural history into New York public school curricula, created forest reserves in the Adirondacks and Catskills, and replaced political appointees with professionally trained scientists for the New York State Fisheries, Game, and Forest Commission.

After briefly serving as vice president, he ascended to the presidency upon the assassination of William McKinley in 1901. Clearly recognizing the threats to the environment posed by industrialization, logging, overgrazing, excessive hunting, oil drilling, and population growth, Roosevelt built on the limited conservation efforts of his predecessors and made environmental protection one of the main features of his administration. A strong sense of nationalism colored Roosevelt’s environmentalism. America’s natural wonders should be a source of national pride for all Americans and the president was determined to preserve them for future generations. To Roosevelt, national parks reflected America’s democratic principles by offering all Americans, not just the elite, the opportunity to enjoy the great outdoors. Among his legislative triumphs were the Newlands Act of 1902, a revolutionary irrigation program for the West, and the Antiquities Act of 1906, which authorized the president to designate “historical landmarks, historic preservation structures, and other objects of scientific interest” as national monuments. Roosevelt wielded this act like a weapon against congressional intransigence and corporate greed, unilaterally protecting America’s landscapes, wildlife, and natural wonders. During his presidency, he created or enlarged 150 national forests, 51 national bird reservations, 6 national parks, and 18 national monuments (some of which, such as the Grand Canyon, were later enlarged into national parks).

Among the strengths of the book are its unifying theme of Roosevelt being a “wilderness warrior” and its generally balanced approach to the subject. Brinkley uses military imagery throughout the book, portraying Roosevelt as waging a crusade to preserve the environment. Comparing Roosevelt’s efforts to secure wildlife protection legislation to a cavalry charge, Brinkley depicts Roosevelt as an environmental commander-in-chief, with park rangers and game wardens as “soldiers” in his war against pollution and the destruction of America’s wilderness. The author also includes some interesting information

on the US Army's role in protecting America's national parks during the period 1886-1918, to include defense against poaching, trespassing, timber harvesting, mineral extraction, and the defacing of natural wonders. Brinkley's study is generally balanced in its analysis of Theodore Roosevelt. While clearly favorable to the president, Brinkley points out the apparent contradictions in his character (for example, Roosevelt's hatred of animal cruelty and his obsession with hunting) as well as his less-than-noble, "white man's burden" view of western expansion and American imperialism. Brinkley also ably describes Roosevelt's motivations for forest preservation as not simply environmental, but also based in personal animosity: "In a sadistic way that no historian, no journalist, and no political commentator can overstate, Roosevelt *enjoyed* making the timber companies suffer."

The book does, however, have some significant weaknesses. It is plagued by an excessive amount of detail. While every author wants his study to be comprehensive, Brinkley takes it too far and includes too much minutiae, particularly concerning Roosevelt's ornithological observations, camping trips, and hunting expeditions. The excessive detail inevitably leads to tangents of limited relevance. A more serious weakness is the book's conclusion. Brinkley ends abruptly with the inauguration of Roosevelt's hand-picked successor, William Howard Taft. While this was the culmination of Roosevelt's presidency, it was by no means the end of Roosevelt's environmental crusade. Several post-presidential events of significance are omitted, including Roosevelt's famous African safari, his quarrel with Taft (which was in part because of their differences concerning environmental policy), and his 1912 Progressive Party presidential campaign. Although the inclusion of these events would lengthen an already hefty volume, more rigorous editing earlier in the book would have made space for an examination of Roosevelt's later years.



Kingston, Ontario:  
McGill-Queen's  
University Press,  
2010

272 pages

\$85.00

### ***Europe Without Soldiers? Recruitment and Retention across the Armed Forces of Europe***

edited by Tibor Szvircsev Tresch and Christian Leuprecht

**Reviewed by Matthew D. Morton, LTC, USA**, Regional Fellow, George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies

This book is a collection of papers presented at the Tenth Biennial Conference of the European Research Group on Military and Society (ERGOMAS) at the Swedish National Defense College in Stockholm in June 2009. In total, the fifteen chapters and introduction cover a wide variety of issues in a host of European countries focused on the subjects of recruitment and retention. Chapter authors represent a diverse field of academics, researchers, military sociologists, historians, and political scientists. The collection of narrowly focused chapters are loosely organized into four topics: demographic aspects and