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Hillsdale College Hosts Lecture on Conservation

Dr. Stanley Temple discusses “Aldo Leopold and Conservation on Private Lands”

By Maureen Collins

Hillsdale College’s biology department hosted Dr. Stanley Temple for a lecture titled, “Aldo Leopold and Conservation on Private Land” on Thursday, October 19. Temple is a Senior Fellow at the Aldo Leopold Foundation and Beers-Bascom Professor Emeritus in Conservation at the University of Wisconsin.

Known as the “Father of Wildlife Conservation,” Aldo Leopold was a 20th century scientist and author of *A Sand County Almanac*, a book of essays on his lifetime of experiences with land conservation. Temple discussed how Leopold’s work described obstacles to conservation and how to go about overcoming them. According to Temple, Leopold recognized that, ultimately, conservation came down to the individual responsibility of landowners.

Leopold knew that many factors would get in the way of adequate conservation for landowners, including maximizing economic returns from one’s land, exercising the privileges of private property, feeling no obligation to act in the public’s interest, suffering no consequences for abusing land, and being unaware of how one’s activities affect land.

Leopold wrote: “We seem ultimately always thrown back on individual ethics as the basis of land conservation. It is hard to make a man, by pressure of law or money, do a thing which does not spring naturally from his own personal sense of right and wrong.”

Dr. Temple reviewed how this line of thinking ultimately led Leopold to his most enduring contribution: his land ethic, reflecting a conviction of individual responsibility for the health of the land. Borrowing from Leopold, Dr. Temple defined health as the capacity of the land for self-renewal and conservation as our effort to understand and preserve this capacity. Temple discussed how Leopold’s land ethic is still relevant to conservation today.

Photos of Dr. Temple’s lecture at Hillsdale College are [available here](#).

Maureen Collins is a Hillsdale College graduate student studying politics. As a public relations intern, Collins writes on campus and community events.