

## Book Review

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**László Erdős: Green Heroes. From Buddha to Leonardo DiCaprio. Springer. e-book: ISBN 978-3-030-31806-2, 21,39 €. Hardcover: ISBN 978-3-030-31805-5, 29,95 €**

“What kind of story can start with Buddha and conclude with Leonardo DiCaprio? Well, a story of a movement that unites animal advocates, nature conservationists, and environmentalists, a movement that ranges from an ancient religious leader to a contemporary movie star. In this book I want to tell some of the most important, most exciting, and most inspiring parts of that story (...). The personalities you will read about in this book form a quite eclectic group: saints and scientists, philosophers and activists, writers and filmmakers, indigenous leaders and clergymen, movie stars and politicians, women and men, humans and non-humans.” – László Erdős begins his book with these words. Therefore he presents a lot of influential people who no doubt had and have an enormous role in shaping the world view of young and adult people.

From the age of seven when I was a kid and later an adolescent, I had a budding and deep interest in Nature. Because of this, I constantly read the fantastic books of David Attenborough, Gerald Durrell, Joy Adamson and Dian Fossey. I also watched the documentaries of Attenborough and Durrell on our black and white television. These writings and films had a definite impact on my career in becoming a biologist and an expert of science popularization. The work of Gerald Durrell was inspirational in dealing with the reintroduction of endangered animals in my scientific research. I still remember from my early years the odour of a freshly published David Attenborough book full of amazing pictures, mainly on wild animals. At home, I still have the collection of almost all of his books published in Hungarian. Later I knew about the work of Jane Goodall and recently I attended her presentation in Budapest together with a full hall. It was a very special moment to see her so close and to photograph the event.

In my childhood I also read the book Doctor Dolittle and the Russian version of this story (both books translated to Hungarian). At that time I thought these were only tales for children and talking with animals is not possible. The section “Talking Apes – Ambassadors of the Animal Kingdom in the Human World” tells us that in fact it is possible. Gorillas, chimpanzees and bonobos can learn more than a thousand words with sign language and talk with their educators and other people. That is a fantastic accomplishment in my eyes.

Darwin, who also has his own chapter in the book, started to demolish the mental wall between men and animals. The research on the cognitive capacities of animals follows this path and shows that primates can also have intelligent ideas to discuss. In this way the difference between Mankind and

the Animal Kingdom is perceived to be much smaller today than some centuries ago.

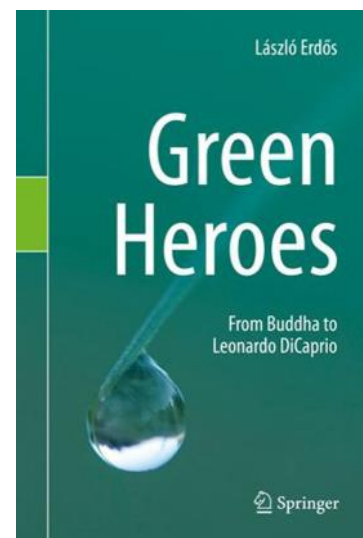
The 223 page book of László Erdős contains three main parts: “Heroes for Animals”, “Heroes for Nature” and “Heroes for the Environment”. The biographies are arranged in 36 chapters – most of them are the stories of well-known people. However, some units are more broad in scope: for example the

one about the beginnings of the conservation movement and another about the Greenpeace-story. Instead of conventional biographies, Erdős wrote portraits based on biographical data, scientific facts, celebrity stories, historical circumstances, ethical principles, green strategies and tactics, and thought-provoking quotes.

Today there are many people working in the nature conservation and environmental area. They are faced day-to-day to problems which are difficult to solve. Environmental problems are often global and one person can feel too small to have an impact on these processes. People working in other areas also know about these problems and can have the same negative feelings and fear. Many people from both groups mentioned here feel an anxiety about climate which can even affect their mental health. This is why it is so important and reassuring to have idols who have enormous achievements in the field. Reading this book “Green Heroes” and seeing their example tell us that change is possible and there is hope that things can go in the right direction.

Who would be interested in this book? Adolescents with fresh enthusiasm for environmental protection. Professionals working in the nature conservation area who want to be inspired by big achievements, plus anybody interested in nature and environmental conservation. Fortunately, the book avoids jargon, so it is probably accessible to the general public also.

To sum it up, the concept of the book is very interesting – this is a work worth reading. It would be interesting to have a similar book for vegetation scientists introducing personalities who shaped botany and vegetation science in the rather long history of botany from the ancient Greeks to the modern era.



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