



The Embattled Wilderness: The Natural and Human History of Robinson Forest and the Fight for Its Future

Erik Reece, James Krupa

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Robinson Forest in eastern Kentucky is one of our most important natural landscapes—and one of the most threatened. Covering fourteen thousand acres of some of the most diverse forest region in temperate North America, it is a haven of biological richness within an ever-expanding desert created by mountaintop removal mining. Written by two people with deep knowledge of Robinson Forest, *The Embattled Wilderness* engagingly portrays this singular place as it persuasively appeals for its protection.

The land comprising Robinson Forest was given to the University of Kentucky in 1923 after it had been clear-cut of old-growth timber. Over decades, the forest has regrown, and its remarkable ecosystem has supported both teaching and research. But in the recent past, as tuition has risen and state support has faltered, the university has considered selling logging and mining rights to parcels of the forest, leading to a student-led protest movement and a variety of other responses.

In *The Embattled Wilderness* Erik Reece, an environmental writer, and James J. Krupa, a naturalist and evolutionary biologist, alternate chapters on the cultural and natural history of the place. While Reece outlines the threats to the forest and leads us to new ways of thinking about its value, Krupa assembles an engaging record of the woodrats and darters, lichens and maples, centipedes and salamanders that make up the forest's ecosystem. It is a readable yet rigorous, passionate yet reasoned summation of what can be found, or lost, in Robinson Forest and other irreplaceable places.

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