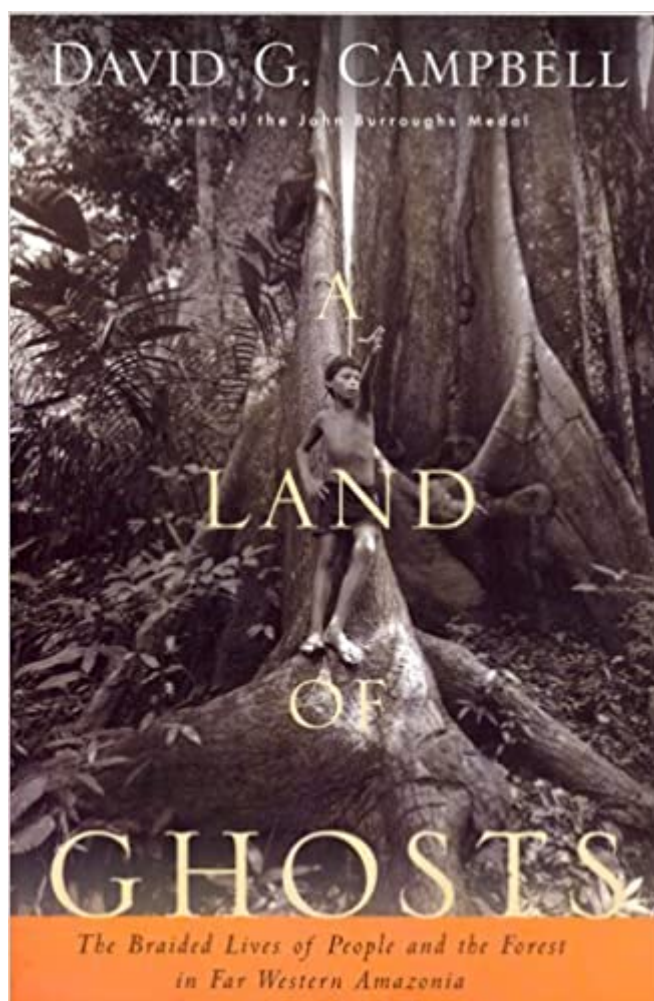


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# A Land Of Ghosts: The Braided Lives Of People And The Forest In Far Western Ia



## Synopsis

For thirty years David G. Campbell has explored the , an enchanting terrain of forest and river that is home to the greatest diversity of plants and animals to have ever existed, anywhere at any time, during the four-billion-year history of life on Earth. With great artistic flair, Campbell describes a journey up the Rio Moa, a remote tributary of the River, 2,800 miles from its mouth. Here he joins three old friends: Arito, a caiman hunter turned paleontologist; Tarzan, a street urchin brought up in a bordello; and Pimentel, a master canoe pilot. They travel together deep into the rainforest and set up camp in order to survey every woody plant on a two-hectare plot of land with about as many tree species as in all of North America. Campbell introduces us to two remarkable women, Dona Cabocla, a widow who raised six children on that lonely frontier, and Dona Ausira, a Nokini Native American who is the last speaker of her tribe's ages-old language. These pioneers live in a land whose original inhabitants were wiped out by centuries of disease, slavery, and genocide, taking their traditions and languages with them. He explores the intimate relationship between the extinction of native language and the extirpation of biological diversity. "It's hard for a people to love a place that is not defined in words and thus cannot be understood. And it's easy to give away something for which there are no words, something you never knew existed." In elegant prose that enchants and entrances, Campbell has written an elegy for the forest and its peoples—for what has become a land of ghosts.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"[The Brazilian rain forest] is . . . marvelously described and movingly evoked . . . Campbell offers

what feels like a lover's last, lingering look." --William Grimes

David G. Campbell is a teacher, ecologist, and explorer who has worked on all seven continents. The author of the highly acclaimed *The Crystal Desert: Summers in Antarctica*, he is a recipient of the Houghton Mifflin Literary Fellowship Award, the PEN Martha Albrand Award, the Burroughs Medal, and the Lannan Award for Nonfiction. Dr. Campbell is a professor of biology and the Henry R. Luce Professor in Nations and the Global Environment at Grinnell College.

Though there are many books that describe nature in the , David Campbell definitely is among the top writers on it. In this book he offers, from start to finish, a very interesting mix between storytelling with lyrical qualities and scientific analysis with social commentary. He is a scientist, focused on botany, and his knowledge of all aspects of science related to the forest are outstanding. We learn about the strategies employed by frogs to reproduce, or by snakes to identify prey, or by trees to attach pollen to beetles. While learning about the science behind such activities and how they evolved, the author leads the reader through his travel log, meeting people and species and learning much about the history of the region he is visiting. Besides all the interesting science, the author also provides a very deep character description of the people who live in this remote frontier. The stories range from rubber tappers left over from a period of abundance, to old Indians who became westernized, to occupants moving there from the south due to government incentives. Each has a story and a way to deal with the challenges of the forest; some have a way to prosper in the exact same circumstances in which others fail. Some characters are presented as integrated in the forest, some as aliens beaten by the forest, some as leaders beating the forest. Most amazing than all the history, social aspects and science however are the narrative abilities of the author. The book is a work of art, as it becomes clear that every word has been hand picked and every metaphor was chosen to provide the reader with the correct image, texture, taste, sound and smell of the forest. Reading is an experience of immersion and is to be savoured as very few books provide such a deep experience. It becomes quite clear to anyone reading the book that the author has a deep connection with his subject, much beyond science. This book is the very best description of the I have encountered, written with gusto. It is the kind of book you will wish you had written. I highly recommend it to anyone interested in the region, in nature writing or in popular science.

I have taught Geography including subjects like the Rain Forest. I was always emphasizing that the gives the earth some 24% of our oxygen. But was not truly aware of the difficult of life on the and its

rivers toward the Pacific and the natives who died living in the region and those who were forced to work in the area under severe weather, dangers and health hazards. Those promoting the issues of current warm climate now should read this book and visit the outsider destruction of this region. Hats off to the author; the reader should have a dictionary all with the book given the author's vocabulary. Great book for the classroom for vocabulary, Latin, Biology and Geography.

Modern day botanist Dr. Campbell's account of thirty years in this remote rainforest is both a captivating read of adventure and more importantly a daunting paradigm of what has happened to this esoteric land. Every molecule of the natural, physical and anthropological world is magically transformed with zesty and passionate prose. The author's own escapades with jaguars, caimans and deadly snakes, to legends of tribes with tails and spirits with backward feet leaves the reader mesmerized. Blend historical blunders of rubber exploitation, cattle farms, slavery, the Trans-Highway, etc. with the resulting decimation of native populations by disease and dilution of heritage, this book is a soothsayer of how humankind has not been so kind. Everyone and everything loses from self-righteous and mindless practices such as occurred here. The outcome are ghosts with haunting apparitions from the past.

Very interesting account of the environment and life -- both animal and human -- on the upper . Well-written, personal -- and discouraging about the future of such areas. The author has an amazing vocabulary -- keep a dictionary handy!

Excellent book.

Wonderfully written, informative and evocative.

A first hand description of life in the last remaining natural jungle on earth and how it is quickly being destroyed. It is a good book if you are a conservationist and enjoy science.

good

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