



Banning DDT: How Citizen Activists in Wisconsin Led the Way

Bill Berry

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On a December day in 1968, DDT went on trial in Madison, Wisconsin. In *Banning DDT: How Citizen Activists in Wisconsin Led the Way*, Bill Berry details how the citizens, scientists, reporters, and traditional conservationists drew attention to the harmful effects of “the miracle pesticide” DDT, which was being used to control Dutch elm disease.

Berry tells of the hunters and fishers, bird-watchers, and garden-club ladies like Lorrie Otto, who dropped off twenty-eight dead robins at the Bayside village offices. He tells of university professors and scientists like Joseph Hickey, a professor and researcher in the Department of Wildlife Management in at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, who, years after the fact, wept about the suppression of some of his early DDT research. And he tells of activists like Senator Gaylord Nelson and members of the state’s Citizens Natural Resources who rallied the cause.

The Madison trial was one of the first for the Environmental Defense Fund. The National Audubon Society helped secure the more than \$52,000 in donations that offset the environmentalists’ costs associated with the hearing. Today, virtually every reference to the history of DDT mentions the impact of Wisconsin’s battles.

The six-month-long DDT hearing was one of the first chapters in citizen activism in the modern environmental era. *Banning DDT* is a compelling story of how citizen activism, science, and law merged in Wisconsin’s DDT battles to forge a new way to accomplish public policy. These citizen activists were motivated by the belief that we all deserve a voice on the health of the land and water that sustain us.

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