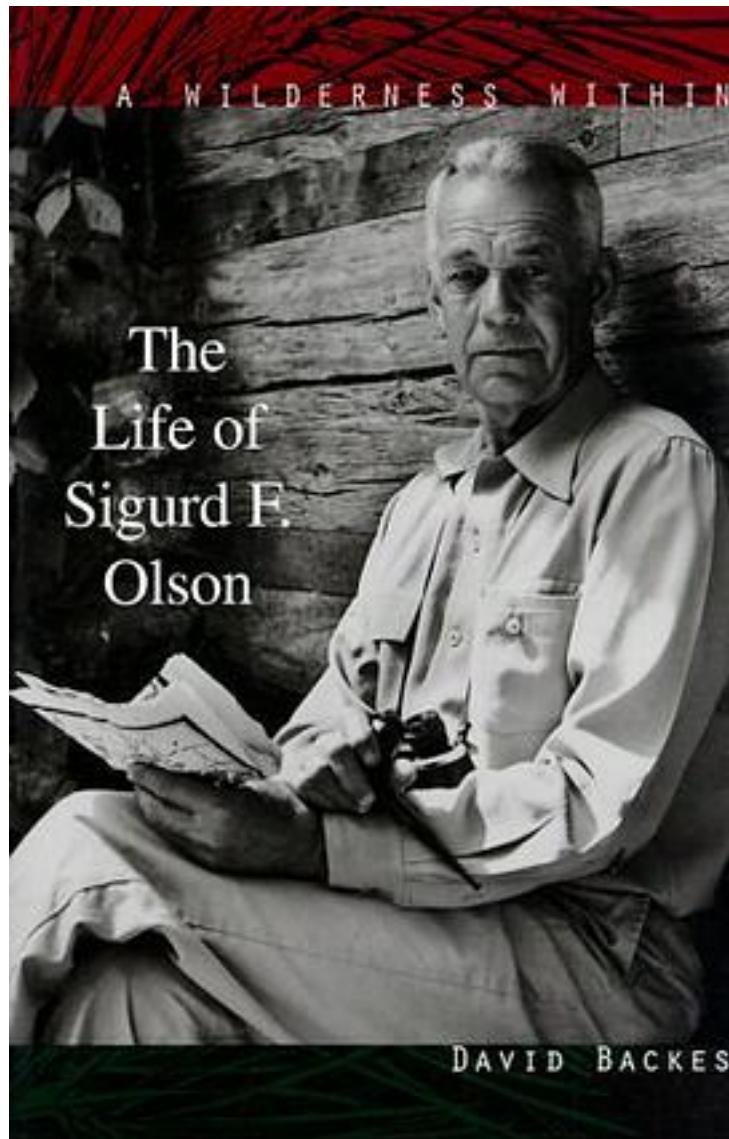


# A Wilderness within



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Sigurd Olson (1899-1982) was acknowledged during his lifetime as a leader of the American environmental movement, an emblematic figure for an entire generation of activists. *A Wilderness Within* is the first biography of this writer, teacher, and activist who was a harbinger of the opening of America's ecological consciousness.

From opposing the building of roads in the wilderness to preserving America's most treasured wild rivers, Olson was involved in fierce battles over the environment throughout his life. He testified before Congress, spoke at town meetings, and was once even hanged in effigy.

But Olson is best known for his many essays that express the wonder, awe, and peace he found in the wilderness. The lyricism and evocative beauty of his prose became a model for nature writers like Barry Lopez and Annie Dillard. Olson's popular books, including *The Singing Wilderness*, *Listening Point*, and *Reflections from the North Country*, are beloved by generations of readers, with over 300,000 copies sold.

*A Wilderness Within* looks beyond the environmental battles and books to expose the inner forces that drove Sigurd Olson. He rejected his father's path as a minister and agonized over his own spiritual life, struggled with school and work. Backes details Olson's painful path to becoming a writer, and the physical and emotional tolls that his activism and writing took of him.

For this biography, Backes conducted interviews with Olson's family and had complete access to Olson's papers, diaries, correspondence, and photographs. This research is what makes *A Wilderness Within* the authoritative portrait of one of the greatest environmentalists of the twentieth century.

A stunning look at a man with a vision for the natural world and a vision for himself, *A Wilderness Within* will be essential reading for Olson fans, historians, and outdoors people around the country.

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