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"Environmental History's Usable Past: On Reviving the Scholarship of Synthesis"

Palmblad, Jonatan

Palmblad, Jonatan. "Environmental History's Usable Past: On Reviving the Scholarship of Synthesis." *Global Environment*: *A Journal of Transdisciplinary History* 17, no. 3 (2024): 666–75.

I want to speak a word for the scholarship of synthesis—a form of interdisciplinarity that preceded the widespread use of the term, but that was largely shouldered aside by enthusiasm for the endless promise of scientific research after World War II. "This is an era of specialists, each of whom sees his own problem and is unaware of or intolerant of the larger frame into which it fits," wrote Rachel Carson in 1962. Synthesis resists and overcomes this still escalating fragmentation of knowledge—a hallmark of late modernity—and, at this conjuncture, when the idea of interdisciplinarity is widely embraced but there is little consensus about what it is and how it can be achieved, historical synthesis offers a fine example of the insights to be gained from the broad-ranging integration of disciplinary knowledges and approaches ... The scholarship of synthesis can help us better understand how we ended up in our current situation and guide our engagements with the present. As such, it is one of history's most valuable resources – and an essential feature of environmental history's usable past. (From the article)

A collaboration between the International Consortium of Environmental History Organizations (ICEHO) and The White Horse Press, "Notes from the Icehouse" is a series of reflections published in each issue of *Global Environment: A Journal of Transdisciplinary History*.

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