

Spiritual ecology is a recent term that refers to the intersection between religion and spirituality and environment. Practitioners of spiritual ecology fall into three categories: the scientific and academic, spiritual or religious environmentalism, and religious or spiritual individuals who relate strongly to the environment.

// Introduction



The scientific and academic study of spiritual ecology is being developed by various university professors in their teaching and research. A growing number of special programs include the Religion and Nature track in the Department of Religion at the University of Florida, the Spiritual Ecology Concentration in the Ecological Anthropology Program at the University of Hawaii, the Center for the Study of Religion and Culture at Vanderbilt University, the interdisciplinary Project on Climate Change in the School for Forestry, Environmental Studies at Yale University, and the Religion and Public Life [Environmental track] Doctoral Program at Northwestern University. The Boston Theological Institute, California Institute of Integral Studies, and Schumacher College in England all offer programs related to spiritual ecology.

The International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture formed in 2006 and is dedicated to multidisciplinary research on spiritual ecology. It describes itself as "a community of scholars engaged in critical inquiry into the relationships among human beings and their diverse cultures, environments, religious beliefs and practices." The society hosts international meetings and publishes the *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture*. Other journals related to spiritual ecology include *Worldviews: Environment, Culture, Religion, Whole Terrain*, a journal of "reflective environmental practice," *Orion* magazine, and *Color Wheel*, among others.

As the major terrestrial intervention in nature by humans, agriculture is often omitted from considerations of spirituality or relegated to a stewardship role. This embryonic area is addressed under such headings as [agricultural spiritualism](#) , and notable in a book on Religion and Agriculture by [Lindsay Falvey](#) .

Scientific and academic

Scientists and academics study the relationship of religion and ecology and environmentalism. These scholars do not necessarily consider themselves to be religious or spiritual, but the nature of their work collaborates the concepts of nature and spirituality. Among the foremost scholars in the study and theorizing of spritual ecology are Roger S. Gottlieb at [Worcester Polytechnic Institute](#)

, [John Grim](#)

at

[Yale University](#)

, Leslie Sponsel at the University of Hawai'i,

[Sarah McFarland Taylor](#)

at

[Northwestern University](#)

, [Bron Taylor](#)

at

[University of Florida](#)

, Mary Evelyn Tucker at Yale University, and

[Mitchell Thomashow](#)

at

[Antioch University New England](#)

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Pro-environmental teachings are present in four world religions – Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam and there is a willingness by clergy and religious teachers to encourage the required behavioural changes through their teachings, hence, pointing the potentials for a spiritual appeal to environmental behaviour. ^[1]

Spiritually motivated environmentalism



Environmentalism, the Ecology of Religion, and the Ecology of Spirituality **Environmentally motivated spirituality**

People whose experiences in nature transcend the scientific, material environment fall into the third category of environmentally motivated spiritualists. This may include such historical figures as St. Francis of Assisi, [Henry David Thoreau](#) , [John Muir](#) , [Albert Schweitzer](#) , [Pierre Teilhard de Chardin](#)

, [Rachel Carson](#)

, [Aldo Leopold](#)

, [Sigurd F. Olson](#)

, [Edward Abbey](#)

, [Carl Sagan](#)

, and

[Paul Shepard](#)

. Contemporaries in this field include

[Wendell Berry](#)

, [Jane Goodall](#)

, [Matthew Fox](#)

, [Stephanie Kaza](#)

, [Robin Wall Kimmerer](#)

, [Satish Kumar](#)

,
[Winona LaDuke](#)

,
[Barry Lopez](#)

,
[James Lovelock](#)

,
[Joanna Macy](#)

,
[Peter Matthiessen](#)

,
[Ralph Metzner](#)

,
[Arne Naess](#)

,
[Theodore Roszak](#)

,
[Gary Snyder](#)

, Michael Soule,

[Brian Swimme](#)

, Edward O. Wilson, and

[Paul Winter](#)

Although an individual may be involved in only one of these three realms of spiritual ecology, they are not mutually exclusive and have the ability to reinforce one another. Jane Goodall, for example is very well-known for her scientific studies, but equally active in the ambassadorship of environmental understanding and compassion (notably, as a UN Messenger of Peace).

See also

- [Cultural ecology](#)
- [Deep ecology](#)
- Religion and ecology

References

1. [^] Kolandai, K. (1999) [A Spiritual Appeal To Environmental Behaviour: Addressing Global Problems Of Population Growth And Consumption](#) .

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