



# Ecologists: A Novel

*William Dritschilo*

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## **Ecologists: A Novel** William Dritschilo

History, philosophy, love, and friendship blend in this fictional journey through the science of ecology. Jewel learns to love ecology during its formative years at Chicago and pursues it and its scientists to Urbana, New Haven, and Vermont. Danny, her nephew, picks up her journey a generation later at Ithaca, where the quiet science is well along its subversive path into society. Along the way, there is a secret that needs to unravel. Real ecologists they meet include Henry Cowles, Frederic Clements, Victor Shelford, Eugene Odum, Rachel Carson, G. Evelyn Hutchinson, Robert MacArthur, E. O. Wilson, the Tallahassee Mafia, and many others. From the Afterword by Thompson Webb III, Brown University: "Bill writes a history of ecology without its being a history, because scenes are imagined and both real and made-up characters populate them. What is refreshing is that the book's two main characters—themselves fictional but based in part on real people—provide a point-of-view (POV) sense of what transpired, rather than a third person telling in a strictly chronological order. A reader gains some sense of what it was like to be on a field trip with Shelford in forests and high plains in the 1930s or to be part of a large over-spilling lab at Cornell in the early 1970s. Many of the leading ecologists during these times are seen in action as they work with their lab groups and focus on classic problems. By listening in as the participants wrestle with ideas and how to gain the data to support them, a reader finds out how scientists work and how broad a range of ideas get introduced and discussed. Some of the issues of being a woman in science whether in physics or ecology are also revealed by two of the fictional characters. The largely unspoken subject in those years of being gay also plays a role in the story's unfolding. It's a fascinating read."

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