



How Should We Aesthetically Appreciate Nature?

**Thursday, April 7 at 3:30 pm
in H. M. Tory Building B-95**

Reception to follow

Abstract: The question of how we should aesthetically appreciate nature has both historical and contemporary significance, since our appreciation of natural environments has greatly influenced and continues to influence how we treat such environments, in particular, which we preserve and which we allocate to various human uses, such as resource extraction and development. The question has been addressed by several different accounts of the aesthetic appreciation of nature, ranging from time-honoured approaches such as the picturesque tradition and landscape formalism to more recent points of view, which are typically associated with cultural relativism and postmodernism. This lecture will review these different positions, arguing that, concerning the question of how we should aesthetically appreciate nature, some are more fruitful than others.

Allen Carlson (PhD University of Michigan) is Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at the University of Alberta. His research interests include aesthetics, environmental philosophy, and epistemology, and he has published widely on the aesthetic appreciation of natural and human environments. Prof. Carlson is well known for his natural environmental model of nature appreciation, which holds that, just as knowledge of art history and art criticism is needed to reveal the aesthetic qualities of works of art, natural scientific knowledge is needed to reveal the actual aesthetic qualities of natural environments. His recent book *Functional Beauty* (2008) explores the role of function in the aesthetic appreciation of natural objects, human artefacts, and works of art. *Nature and Landscape* (2008) is an introduction to environmental aesthetics, while the edited collection *Nature, Aesthetics, and Environmentalism: From Beauty to Duty* (2008) gathers essays on the relationship between environmental aesthetic and ethics.