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# The Tanoak Tree: An Environmental History of a Pacific Coast Hardwood

*Frederica Bowcutt*

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**The Tanoak Tree: An Environmental History of a Pacific Coast Hardwood** Frederica Bowcutt
This history of the tanoak, a once common tree native to northern California and southern Oregon that was ultimately removed in favor of the monoculture of conifers we know today, tells a much larger story of cultural loss and commercial development throughout the American West. Frederica Bowcutt begins her examination with the reverence indigenous communities had for the tree, which they valued for its nut, a nutritious staple of their diet, and contrasts it with the European settlers, who stripped the tanoak of its bark for use in their leather tanning factories. However, as soon as it became clear that conifers were just as effective for tanning—and cheaper and faster to grow—profit-minded industrialists quickly cleared the tanoaks and encouraged the growth of native confers, which currently dominates the landscape. The result, as Bowcutt reveals, has led to the loss of valuable cultural knowledge while placing a tremendous strain on the region’s ecosystem.

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