

Conserving Bird Biodiversity: General Principles and Their Applications edited by Ken Norris and Deborah J. Pain (2002), xiii + 337 pp., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK. ISBN 0 521 78340 2 (hbk), £75.00, 0 521 78949 4 (pbk), £27.95.

The problem with titling this book *Conserving Bird Biodiversity* may be that it is not read by conservationists who lack a direct interest in birds. This would be highly unfortunate because, as the editors note in the preface, “this book is about biodiversity conservation illustrated with examples from birds, rather than a book about bird conservation per se”.

Moreover, principles and applications of bird conservation have often led the way in the overall field of conservation. From the first development of global spatial biodiversity priority-setting (Endemic Bird Areas) to the production of a public access fully-documented global list of threatened species (see <http://www.birdlife.org/species/index.cfm>), this is in no small part due to the work of BirdLife International. Priority-setting and research for other taxa has slowly followed in the footsteps of this pioneering work, and yet again BirdLife have raised the bar with the most cogent and realistic system to date of globally assessing important management-level sites for bird conservation (see <http://www.birdlife.org/sites/index.cfm>). Other examples are not hard to find – from the ground-breaking work of the British Trust for Ornithology in catalysing volunteer efforts towards conservation research, to the leadership of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in research on animal sounds. Sadly, one area in which the bird world has been lagging behind is the free electronic availability of data, perhaps due to the commercial value of this commodity in the form of bird books.

This book, written by a selection of pre-eminent experts in bird conservation today, covers much of the most up-to-date thinking across a broad range of bird conservation topics, with brief case studies of these theories in practice. A few authors lack direct familiarity with bird conservation but, in part because of this, bring some interesting perspectives. A great strength is that many of these chapters act as synthesized reviews, and references running to 50 pages in length continually tempt the reader to learn more. On the flip side, the

various chapters are unfortunately not as well integrated as in some other books in the series, such as *Priorities for the Conservation of Mammalian Diversity*. There is thus some overlap and lack of continuity between chapters, and limited referencing between them – which will hinder the many readers who do not read such edited volumes from cover to cover.

The first chapter, an exploration of the taxonomic units of biodiversity conservation, provides a balanced overview of this subject, which has perhaps been recently debated more widely and publicly for birds than any other group. After this is a useful introduction to the economic valuation of avian biodiversity, although it would have benefited from more discussion of the ultimate problems of mainstream economic valuation of biodiversity.

The third chapter, an overview of atlas mapping and monitoring of bird species, provides much of the groundwork for the next two chapters, which are excellent reviews of taxonomic and geographic priority-setting – both fields that, as mentioned above, are considerably further advanced for birds than for many other groups.

Chapters 6–10 deal with much of the nitty gritty of identifying species-specific and pandemic pressures, and then implementing suitable conservation actions. Again, many of the avian examples given stand out as some of the furthest advanced in the conservation field: from population viability analyses for red-cockaded woodpeckers to the development of behaviour-based models for oystercatchers, from studies of the landscape-level habitat requirements of spotted owls to successes in intensive ‘close-order’ management of species right on the brink of extinction such as lesser kestrels or kakapos. The book then concludes with a review of bird-related international conservation policies and programmes, and a thought-provoking personal account of capacity-building on the ground from one of its most successful practitioners.

In summary, this book should appeal to the broad range of readers that the editors envisage; from undergraduate students, through conservation researchers, to conservation practitioners and policy-makers. Some sections may prove a little dry or technical for the latter end of the scale, but this volume is generally very

accessible. We have no hesitation in recommending that this book be widely read, particularly by those outside the field of bird conservation!

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The Trade in Wildlife: Regulation for Conservation
 edited by Sara Oldfield (2002), xxi + 210 pp., Earthscan,
 London, UK. ISBN 1 85383 954 X (pbk), £17.95, \$29.95.

“Use of wild living resources, if sustainable, is an important conservation tool because the social and economic benefits derived from such use provide incentives for people to conserve them”. So reads a key element of the IUCN Policy Statement on Sustainable Use adopted at its Amman Congress in 2000. This book considers the application of this principle to the international wildlife trade. The 23 authors are mostly experts in conservation and wildlife use, but there are welcome contributions on legal and illegal trade in antiquities, drugs and environmental resources. The majority of papers were delivered at a workshop in Cambridge, UK, in September 2001 and, due to that and some deft editorial work, display a fair degree of coherence.

Broad, Mulliken and Roe provide a sound overview of the extent and nature of the trade, arguing that its relationship with the conservation status of species is complex, and calling, persuasively, for a multi-disciplinary approach to assessment. The same thinking is reflected in Dickson’s valuable discussion of the goals of regulation as exemplified in CITES (the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora). He points out that, while the treaty preamble refers to protecting wild species from overexploitation, it makes no mention of human livelihoods. However, the CITES Strategic Vision and recent initiatives, such as that on sturgeon, show its willingness to work within the sustainable development agenda.

Sinclair-Brown and Moyle contribute intellectually stimulating chapters on the legal framework and economic effects of the regulation of the international wildlife trade. As the latter explains: “The consequence of wildlife regulations is to reallocate the costs of conservation effort”. Murphree sets out the social context for effective wildlife management and characteristically argues for real devolution of control. In a section on regulatory systems Vasquez presents the CITES Secretariat’s perspective on enforcement and wildlife crime, Morgan discusses the European Union’s policy

of going further than the CITES rules require, and Mistra describes India’s blanket ban on wildlife exports, which provides no conservation incentives for local people.

The catastrophic decline of rhino populations in Africa and Asia, despite the CITES ban on international trade since 1975, is elegantly chronicled by Leader-Williams. He shows that modest recoveries in some species in some places are due to a combination of mostly local measures, although teasingly leaving open the question of whether a carefully regulated legal trade would help. Jachmann demonstrates that in Zambia enforcement effort by the Luangwa Integrated Resource Development Project had a visible impact on reducing levels of elephant poaching, whereas the CITES ivory trade ban did not. Hutton and Webb offer the catchiest chapter heading with *Crocodiles: legal trade snaps back*. Describing the transformation of the crocodilian trade over 20 years to a situation where less than 10% of internationally sold skins are now from the wild, they show that trade has generated conservation incentives and that the previous damaging illegal trade has been virtually eliminated.

Oldfield takes on the international timber trade, which is devastating whole ecosystems. She makes a persuasive case for increasing CITES involvement, pointing out that the leading “consumer choice” scheme, that of the Forest Stewardship Council, only accounts for 1% of tropical timber imported into the EU. Bowen-Jones contributes a valuable discussion of the bushmeat trade, where the international element is quite small but a CITES working party has persuaded some African range states to address the issues. He is clear that bans will not work and that incentive-based local management schemes are urgently required.

Two of the most telling chapters, on devil’s claw (Lombard and du Plessis) and the Tanimbar corella (Jepson), illustrate the folly of ill-conceived proposals for listing species on CITES, and undermine the simplistic notion that a trade ban can only do good or be neutral, so ‘if in doubt, ban it’. In a concluding section Cooney suggests that, in spite of its narrow focus, patchy enforcement and crude sanctions, CITES has a legitimacy, is improving, and could be further improved to benefit both people and wildlife.

Overall the book reads surprisingly well for a compilation and there are few weak links. It assumes a basic knowledge of how CITES works, which is a trifle optimistic even for those who take part in it. It should provoke constructive forward thinking amongst those who influence and take CITES decisions, if they have the good sense to pick it up.

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Coral ID CD-ROM by John "Charlie" Veron and Mary Stafford Smith (2002), Australian Institute for Marine Science. See <http://www.aims.gov.au/coralid> for pricing and availability.

Coral reefs have become degraded throughout much of the world due to coastal development and degradation, uncontrolled exploitation, and climate change. Many initiatives have been taken to address the principle issues involved in reef degradation: detailed ecological and physiological studies, various forms of information gathering, education, and political persuasion. However, corals are notoriously difficult to identify, and although they have been studied more than any marine invertebrate group, the essential problem remains: how can corals be conserved when only a specialist can reliably identify them? To address this, the Australian Institute for Marine Science, with support from the Great Barrier Reef Research Foundation, the Henry Foundation, and the Center for Applied Biodiversity Science at Conservation International, have produced a CD-ROM field guide for the identification of the World's corals. Coral ID is for both beginners and experts, and is easy to use and fully self-explanatory. It is, however, more than just an identification guide – it illustrates the underwater appearance, skeletal detail, and species characters, and provides species comparisons, distribution maps and regional species lists. There are 850 GIS-generated maps showing the distribution of all the species, 2,500 colour photographs for field identification, 2,000 monochrome photographs and drawings illustrating skeletal detail, and descriptions of all the species in the 3-volume *Corals of the World* published by the Australian Institute for Marine Science in 2000.

World Atlas of Biodiversity: Earth's Living Resources in the 21st Century by Brian Groombridge & Martin D. Jenkins (2002), xii + 340 pp., University of California Press, California, USA. ISBN 0 520 23668 8 (hbk), £37.95, \$54.95.

The *World Atlas of Biodiversity* provides a comprehensive map-based overview of global biodiversity and key biodiversity issues. It summarizes the latest research and analysis by the UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre and the conservation community worldwide, outlining the relationships between humans and the rest of the material world. The biodiversity of terrestrial, marine and inland water systems, and trends in condition and species status are some of the issues covered. New findings, which include maps showing global variation in family level diversity of flowering plants,

freshwater fishes and land vertebrates, provide an indication of areas of special value.

Turtle Conservation Fund, 2002. A Global Action Plan for Conservation of Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles. Strategy and Funding Prospectus 2002–2007. Conservation International, Washington, DC, USA and Chelonian Research Foundation, Lunenburg, Massachusetts, USA. 30 pp. No ISBN. Unpriced.

The Turtle Conservation Fund, established in May 2002 as an initiative of Conservation International, the IUCN/Species Survival Commission Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group and the IUCN/Species Survival Commission Turtle Survival Alliance, has launched the Global Action Plan for Conservation of Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles. There are 300 species, about half of which are threatened. The Action Plan summarizes current threats, conservation initiatives and outlines three phases of action for which funding is required. Phase 1, planned for 2002–2007, aims to prevent the imminent extinction of species. Phase 2, from 2007 to 2012, will expand the focus of conservation activities, and Phase 3 will secure the long-term future for these species. The budget for the first 5 years of activity is US \$5.65 million.

Hunter and Hunted: Relationships Between Carnivores and People by Hans Kruuk (2002), xii + 246 pp., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK. ISBN 0 521 89109 4 (pbk), £17.95, 0521 81410 3 (hbk), £47.50.

Hunter and Hunted analyzes the complex and often contradictory relationships between carnivores and people. Illustrated with specially commissioned drawings, the author explores our fascination for carnivores, as pets and as predators, and explains their role in natural ecosystems. Carnivore conservation is discussed, alongside our competition with these species for space and food, and the issues of hunting these animals for their pelts for use in clothing, medicine and cosmetics.

Vital Signs 2002–2003: The Trends that are Shaping our Future (2002), 215 pp., Earthscan Publications Ltd., London, UK. ISBN 1 85383 918 3 (pbk), £14.95.

Vital Signs 2002–2003 looks at key indicators of our times that demonstrate our social, economic and environmental progress. The book distills 45 'vital signs' from various governmental and scientific sources, discussing issues such as global temperature, sprawling cities and transboundary parks.