

**Conservation for the 21st Century**

*Edited by David Western and Mary Pearl*

Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 1989, 365 pp., HB £28.00

What a splendid book to start the 1990s! Being the proceedings of a conference arranged by the New York Zoological Society, it largely examines the gross depletion of wildlife and its habitats, both present and prospective. Paper after illuminating paper demonstrates that the mass extinction under way is, for the first time in the history of mass extinctions, the doings of a single species; and that ironically the same species is the only one ever to be able to safeguard the other species.

It is this latter perspective that informs much of the book. No catalogue of gloom and doom, it demonstrates that policy initiatives and management measures are available to do a far better job of stemming wildlands destruction. As a case-book study of what we can do if only we mobilize the will, it is uniquely optimistic. For this we must primarily thank the instigator of the conference, David Western, one of the most imaginative as well as scholarly of all ecologists—and perhaps the most positive-spirited of them all: 'If humanity is the sole threat to wildlife, it is also its only hope.' Who else would think to ask whether we should concentrate not only on saving as many species as we can, but also watch out for an even more important imperative, safeguarding the integrity of nature.

With cogently argued papers by such luminaries as Ed Wilson, Storrs Olson, Sam McNaughton, Brian Walker, Alvaro Ugalde, Jeff McNeely and Bill Conway among a host

of others, this is a book that I shall return to often—for information, insight and inspiration. *Norman Myers.*

**The Global Environmental Movement**

*John McCormick*

Belhaven Press, London, 1989, 259pp., HB £27.50

This 'stock-taking' book reviews the environmental movement from 1945 to the mid-1980s, viewing it as an economic, social and political phenomenon of global scope. It traces the early concerns of preservationists, the mass movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s, and the more pragmatic responses from the late 1970s onwards. Thus, it covers such landmark events as Silent Spring, Minemata Bay, the Stockholm Conference, the arrival of UNEP, Chernobyl, the rising environmental interest of developing countries, and the Brundtland Commission.

An interesting history of the phenomenon, it is sound on information and documentation, but rather light on analysis and evaluation. For instance, while it does a good job on describing the interrelationships between environment and development in both the North and South, it does not go as deeply and systematically as this reviewer would like into the dynamic interplay between the two fields. How are ecological-economic trade-offs to be tackled in programmatic fashion? How are policy makers to deal with the many uncertainties that beset the debate? An arch-example, the greenhouse effect, receives only short shrift. One of the most intractable issues, tropical deforestation is mentioned only in passing. Nor is there much sustained treatment of the chal-

lenge of global resources and environmental interdependency, or of the environmental impacts of international trade and the debt problem.

These shortcomings apart, the book can be solidly recommended as a background account of a phenomenon that will surely dominate the next 40 years.

*Norman Myers.*

**Public Policies and the Misuse of Forest Resources**

*Edited by Robert Repetto and Malcolm Gillis*

Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988, 432 pp., PB £19.50

The degradation and deforestation of forest lands results from land-use activities controlled by a variety of public policies. Forests are cut for agriculture, silviculture and planned settlement schemes. Large areas are degraded by timber extraction. All these processes are under the control of local or central governments. In many countries such bureaucracies have discouraged conservation of the forest resources and aggravated the pressures on forests from growing human populations; this compilation provides details of the problems.

An Overview explains the cycle of tropical deforestation and impoverishment in broad terms, leading into seven detailed and heavily referenced chapters dealing with Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, China, the Brazilian Amazon, West Africa and finally the United States of America.

In the Conclusion, the editors emphasize that changes in policy can substantially reduce resource wastage, seen as the fundamental problem in the

tropics. These are not just forestry policies, they include policies on extension of agriculture, mining, dams, roads and many other projects directly destructive of forests. They also include tax, credit and pricing policies that stimulate short-term commercial investment in forest exploitation.

The editors identify a series of measures for adoption by tropical governments, and others for adoption by industrial countries and international agencies. They emphasize that industrial nations must recognize the global benefits from setting aside tropical rain forests for conservation, and urge development assistance agencies to site major projects away from critical ecosystems. Finally, they support the Tropical Forestry Action Plan, a five-point framework that gives emphasis to cross-sectoral solutions to tropical deforestation.

This is a scholarly work virtually without illustrations. It is suitable for policy-makers, advanced students and conservationists concerned to find out the underlying political reasons for tropical deforestation today. *N. Mark Collins.*

**Studies in Himalayan Ecology**

*Edited by Tej Vir Singh and Jagdish Kaur*  
Himalayan Books, New Delhi, 1989 (revised edition), Rs495

This is a slightly enlarged edition of a book first published in 1980. Of the 29 chapters, six are new, one is revised; two of the papers new to this book were first published elsewhere. The mean chapter length is 9.5 pages; a few should have been longer, and some shorter.

The 'Ecology' of the title is used in the widest sense, with

coverage including such disparate topics as floristics, tourism, and the dynamics of water erosion; there is a commendable emphasis on development issues. 'Himalayan' is used more narrowly; the case-study chapters are rooted firmly in India's Garwhal Himalaya and similar regions of Nepal and Pakistan receive no mention.

The book is not for casual reading; the text includes many legible graphs and tables, but there are few photographic illustrations (all, except a small frontispiece, in murky black-and-white). There is an important core of contributions covering: water erosion and remedial measures; watershed conservation; deforestation and flood risk; the ecology of forest fires; plant breeding and development; potential for increased fodder production; agroforestry in the hills; and rural development. The merits of these chapters outweigh the demerits of the few where jargon is more evident than meaningful content. Overall, the book would have benefited from more selectivity, a heavier editorial hand, and an introductory chapter putting the major themes in perspective; nevertheless, it can be recommended as a useful survey of many key topics.

*Brian Groombridge.*

**Conservation of European Reptiles and Amphibians**

*Edited by Keith Corbett*  
Christopher Helm, London, 1989, 274pp., PB £11.95

The wide interest shown in Europe's surprisingly diverse herpetofauna (278 species according to the present volume, which includes Turkey and the western USSR) is attested to by the existence of field guides in several European lan-

guages. Given this, the scarcity of readily available information on the current status of these species has been somewhat frustrating to date.

This volume, compiled by the Conservation Committee of the Societas Europaea Herpetologica, goes a considerable way towards filling the gap. Following brief introductory chapters on the European herpetofauna, the threats they face, and international efforts for their conservation (particularly the Bern Convention), twelve 'key' taxa and two critical sites (Evros in Greece and eastern Sardinia) are reviewed in some detail. The rest of the volume comprises brief accounts for each country in Europe, summarizing present knowledge and highlighting the all too evident gaps in that knowledge. Although the book could have benefited from tighter editorial control, it still provides a very useful introduction to the subject.

*Martin Jenkins.*

**Crocodiles**

*Rodney Steel*  
Christopher Helm, London, 1989, 198pp., HB £14.95

To judge from the popularity of the dinosaur exhibits at museums around the world, one would anticipate that the appeal of Rodney Steel's book on crocodiles would be enhanced by his frequent reference to their illustrious progenitors. The book is heavily slanted towards the morphology and palaeontological affiliations of crocodiles, but weaves this into a popular account of the family and its biology.

The central part describes each of the extant species of crocodylian in turn, summarizing distribution and status, with a collection of snippets