

Book reviews

Masculinities in Forests: Representations of Diversity by Carol J. Pierce Colfer (2020) 266 pp., Taylor & Francis, Abingdon, UK. ISBN 978-0-367-81577-6 (e-book), open access.

This book contributes to a broadening of gender studies into the international forest conservation and development sector. Moving on from studies with a primary focus on women's worlds, the author seeks to also incorporate men's worlds, to foster more holistic views of forest management and collaborations with those who live in or near them. With analysis and reflections on a series of field sites, the book follows the course of the author's career from the USA to Indonesia and within a transnational organization. This allows the exploration of the role of different forms of masculinity in people–forest relationships. Premised on the stereotype of forests as spaces dominated by men, the book demonstrates the variability of masculine identities and behaviours and how these relate to and influence management, research and lived experiences of forests.

The foreword by Susan Paulson puts the book into context within the broader literature and is especially valuable for readers unfamiliar with gender or masculine studies. The first chapter gives the motivation of the author for writing the book and develops the conceptual framework used for the subsequent case studies. To conceptualize masculinities, the author uses the construct of a harp, with its frame being analogous with the stability and constraints that cultures provide, the strings representing elements of choice (qualities, interests, norms), which form chords (linked qualities and occupations) and eventually a song representing a man's version of masculinity within his own life.

Following an explanation of positionality and the author's formative experience of masculinity during her childhood (Chapter 2), the main case studies are presented in Chapters 3–6, with an example of the harp analogy on each heading page. Chapter 3 covers the time the author spent in Bushler Bay (USA) in the 1970s, which then comprised two logging-dependent communities. Here the example of the harp is framed by competition vs cooperation, time vs productivity, and independence vs hierarchy. The differences between masculinities of loggers and U.S. Forestry Service staff are explored, with a thought-provoking inclusion of the norms and expectations derived from the structure of the local high school basketball team.

The subsequent two chapters focus on masculinities in a range of Indonesian forest contexts, firstly in Bali and Kalimantan (Chapter 4)

and then West Sumatra (Chapter 5). For Chapter 4 an example of a Kenyah harp is framed by competition vs cooperation, generosity vs greed and aristocrat vs commoner. This is countered by the Minang harp example of state, custom and religion in Chapter 5. There is richness to the sections focused on Indonesia, particularly regarding the time that the author has spent with the Kenyah and the counter-narrative that can be created through the norms and practices of men and women at the time of the main field studies. Rather than being based on a geographical location, Chapter 6 delves into the intersection of masculinities and institutional (mis)practices of an anonymized forest research organization that the author worked for in the 1990s and 2000s. Here the description of internal politics, the mismatch between organizational policy and internal practice will strike a chord with many in the sector. Charting the author's return to field sites in Bushler Bay and Indonesia, Chapter 7 offers reflection on the dynamic nature of people–forest relationships and the impact that masculinities have on how people live in, use or seek to exert control over these places.

The depth of the book comes from the longitudinal nature of the author's career and the considered retrospective this offers. As a mid-career, northern, feminist, male conservation and development professional, I would encourage others to take advantage of this freely available book. Read it, if even just the succinct chapter summaries (3–6) and the return to field sites detailed in Chapter 7, reflect, and work to challenge our everyday practices to better take diversity, gender and masculinities into account.

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The Bird-Friendly City: Creating Safe Urban Habitats by Timothy Beatley (2021) 272 pp., Island Press, Washington, DC, USA. ISBN 978-1-64283-047-7 (pbk), USD 35.00.

At a time when many people, especially in urban environments, are gaining greater appreciation of the nature around them, *The Bird-Friendly City* provides a welcome discussion of how birds, our most visible and audible urban wildlife, can be encouraged to flourish. Timothy Beatley presents a compelling case for enhancing what he calls the 'birdicity' of our cities—a term characterizing the bird-friendliness of cities. The argument for increasing birdicity appears to represent a realistic and

achievable win–win situation, whereby benefits to birds can also enhance the well-being of human city dwellers. A multitude of additional benefits are also explained, from the greater value of bird-friendly properties to the reduction of heat island effects by urban green spaces. As such, this book supports the growing movement among urbanites who respond to the biodiversity crisis by taking action to demand better urban planning for wildlife.

Timothy Beatley has undertaken a huge amount of research into the different approaches to create bird-friendly cities and recalls his first-hand experience with practitioners leading these campaigns. The book showcases issues facing birds in urban environments and, being primarily based in North America, the major threat to migratory songbirds from collisions is well represented. The 12 chapters cover various case studies to structure the reader's journey, and although some points are reiterated, these serve to reinforce the case and mean that readers of various backgrounds will feel comfortable picking up this book.

The book's subtitle *Creating Safe Urban Habitats* suggests that the text will provide a kind of manual for designing bird-friendly cities. Yet although the book thoroughly discusses the situation in North America, with pertinent case studies from further afield, it does not exhaust the discussion of challenges in other parts of the world, nor the range of solutions available. Although the book provides a starting point for advocating change, conservationists, practitioners and campaigners need to carefully consider the local contexts and implement evidence-based approaches to make cities more bird-friendly. This is particularly pertinent as we navigate the energy transition from fossil fuels to renewables, which will require a significant change in land use in certain areas and carry potential risks to vulnerable bird species. Evidence-based approaches are also needed given the complexities of highly artificial urban and suburban environments. For example, garden bird feeding in New Zealand has been found to favour higher densities of introduced seed-eating birds, with potentially negative consequences for native insectivorous species.

The Bird-Friendly City is a timely and commendable book that challenges our perceptions of how cities should operate and which birds can flourish given the opportunity. It also promotes the importance of valuing the nature we retain in cities; veteran trees are worth more in terms of bird habitat and carbon sequestration than newly planted saplings. The book also highlights how gardens, which make up the majority of the suburban environment,

can play a significant role in habitat provision. Maintaining native vegetation in gardens can create effective ecological corridors and refugia. The book finishes with a reflection on the urgency and opportunity we have to mitigate the threats to birds within our cities and to live harmoniously with nature. I would encourage anyone, from home owners to architects and city planners, to read this book.

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International Treaties in Nature Conservation: A UK Perspective by David A. Stroud, Ruth Cromie, Max Finlayson, Melissa Lewis, Taej Mundkur, Dave Pritchard et al. (2021) 94 pp., Biodiversity Press, Totnes, UK. ISBN 978-1-5272-8631-3 (pbk), GBP 19.99.

Most people working in nature conservation are aware that the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Ramsar Wetlands Convention, CITES, the Convention on Migratory Species and other so-called multilateral environmental agreements exist, and somehow matter. In addition to these global treaties, many other legal instruments influence conservation at regional levels, for instance the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, the African–Eurasian Waterbirds Agreement, and European Union legislation such as the Birds and Habitats Directives. But what are these conventions, agreements and directives, exactly? How and by whom are they made, how do they work, and how useful are they? These and other questions are addressed in this concise book by David Stroud and 10 co-authors.

The book's stated aim is to shed light on the key features of international legal instruments for nature conservation, including how they 'came about, how they function in theory and practice, the main issues they address and the challenges they face both in making decisions and in terms of their

national and international implementation' (p. ix). To be sure, the landscape of international wildlife law and policy is complex and evolved over many decades in a largely haphazard way. In the book's own words, the result is 'messy' and 'almost certainly not what one would plan on a blank piece of paper' (p. 2). Clearly and concisely introducing this topic is thus no easy task. Yet, to my mind, Stroud and co-authors achieve their purpose as well as can be done in 90 pages.

The book addresses the historical development of treaty-making for nature conservation, the topics treaties cover, the reasons why they do so, various institutional aspects such as the decision-making on the application and development of treaties at periodic, often high-profile Conferences of the Parties, and the ways in which treaties are applied at the national level and compliance is promoted. The book strikes a good equilibrium between general explanations and concrete examples, and contains helpful text boxes, tables, maps and photographs throughout. It touches on a wide range of international regimes, and for illustrative purposes offers a more in-depth treatment of one of them, the International Convention on the Regulation of Whaling, in an appendix.

The authors have earned their stripes in the world of international wildlife law and policy, and their cumulative expertise and experience with the practice of various treaties shows in the text. There is no naivety there regarding either the content of treaties, which is often an 'uneasy compromise between what is environmentally desirable and what is politically possible' (p. 20), or the often disappointing degrees of compliance with their terms. As the book puts it matter-of-factly, it is 'in the nature of national governments around the world to undertake to do something but then to just never quite get around to doing all that has been committed to' (pp. 44–45).

At the same time, the authors emphasize the important roles that treaty regimes can

play, not only in addressing transboundary conservation issues, but also in providing a stable longer-term view, counterbalancing at least in part the erratic tendencies of national policies produced by short-lived democratic governments. They rightly point out that many conservation success stories have been directly linked to global or regional legal instruments, including the adoption of protective legislation for numerous threatened species and the establishment of protected area networks. Overall, the book provides a balanced account of both the successes and shortcomings of international conservation treaties.

Three of the book's 10 chapters have a distinct UK focus, addressing national implementation of treaty commitments and the influence of the UK on the international plane. Although these chapters are most directly relevant for the British public, they are also instructive for readers elsewhere. The UK focus does mean that the regional instruments discussed in the book are predominantly European. If I really had to pick something to quibble about with this book, however, it would be the font size in the footnotes and some illustrations, where the print is so small that even a lawyer needs reading glasses.

Although I can no longer credibly pretend to be someone who is new to the world of wildlife treaties, I suspect this book is not only a refreshing read for the insider but also a valuable and highly readable introduction for the curious outsider. So, if you wish to gain a greater understanding of the role of international legal instruments in biodiversity conservation without enrolling in a Master's programme on international environmental law, then Stroud and co-authors offer great value for your money.

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