

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.

BEN JOBSON *BirdLife International, Cambridge, UK. E-mail ben.jobson@birdlife.org*

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.

ARIE TROUWBORST *Tilburg University, Department of Public Law and Governance, Tilburg, The Netherlands E-mail a.trouwborst@tilburguniversity.edu*