

Publications

Wildlife Conservation: In the Belly of the Beast by Grahame J. W. Webb (2014) xxv+342 pp., Charles Darwin University Press, Darwin, Australia. ISBN 978-1-921576-88-1 (pbk), AUD 45.

'Wildlife conservation is largely anthropocentric rather than biocentric. It is about the actions of people more than the actions of wildlife.' Drawing on a lifetime of work both in international conservation and on domestic issues in his home country of Australia, Grahame Webb distils the reality of working in conservation. Written in a semi-autobiographical style *In the Belly of the Beast* is easy to read and avoids the technical jargon often present in conservation, going so far as to criticize it. He uses candid humour and clever cartoons to highlight serious messages.

His willingness to evaluate flagship conservation issues critically, which many would avoid for fear of being labelled a heretic, is refreshing. He asks 'How many species of plants and animals placed on threatened species lists, to stimulate conservation action, have ever been removed when the conservation action overcomes the threat?' Whether you agree with his views or not, they are well argued and highlight the critical role biopolitics, the media, marketing, moral outrage, protectionism, biopaternalism, profiteering and even Pamela Anderson can have on conservation outcomes.

The dedication in a lifetime of conservation is clear, although it has been paved with frustration. He highlights the difference between what he terms 'big-C' conservation, concerning population and habitat persistence, and 'little-c' conservation largely driven by animal rights and welfare motivations, and this is a theme throughout the book. His arguments are clear, well-reasoned and important, although the book does run the risk of becoming overzealous in its critique.

This aside, there are plenty of good-news anecdotes, from the recovery of Kemp's Ridley turtles to his own personal successes with crocodiles. Webb's insights, which stem from his knowledge of crocodile conservation, are used to present his understanding of the multifaceted beast that makes up conservation. He also draws from many other species and scenarios, and there is something of interest in the book whatever your conservation passion. The focus is largely on single species conservation but this does not detract from the overall message.

For students aspiring to become conservation leaders or for experienced conservation professionals, Webb's words will stimulate debate. His observations of 'grantsmanship' will be a reminder of familiar moral conundrums faced by many scientists, and the chapter entitled 'Killing' should be read by all those taking their first steps in conservation. His observation that research can have a 'passionate allure like sex' where the bureaucracy surrounding many research endeavours is likened to 'the use of a bicycle tyre as a condom' made me laugh out loud.

In the Belly of the Beast contains serious messages and observations and many people may feel their beliefs have been offended, but Webb is not apologetic. He has learned from both his successes and failures and any 'big-C' conservationist would be remiss not to listen to what Webb's experience has taught him: 'The fundamental importance of science in conservation issues is clearly under threat, as the political machinery responds more and more to advocates and political expediency. This trend is not in the best interests of people or wildlife'. Whether you agree or disagree with his stance, his observations and experience should not be ignored.

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Invasive Species in a Globalized World edited by Reuben P. Keller, Marc W. Cadotte & Glenn Sandiford (2014), The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, USA. ISBN 9780226166186 (pbk), USD 45.

Midway through the term of the 2011–2020 strategic plan of the Convention of Biological Diversity, the conservation of nature is at an important turning point. One of the most significant threats to biodiversity is the increasing number of invasive species and their global impacts on other species, ecosystems and biodiversity goods. This book provides an overview of patterns of invasions and the most effective responses, with a particular focus on policy measures to prevent the arrival of invasive species and mitigate their negative effects.

The volume is structured in four sections: the first explores the facets of biological invasions, providing a synthesis of the biological basis of invasions, addressing the perceptions of different sectors of society, and discussing the most effective communication strategies;

the second focuses on the introduction phase of invasions, providing data on importation patterns of living organisms for commercial purposes, and exploring economic aspects; the third analyses the management of invasive species, reporting example cases and describing various approaches; and the final section focuses on policy responses, presenting reviews of the US and European frameworks.

The book originates from a congress held in Chicago in 2011 and generally has a North American perspective, but it does report cases from other regions, from the competitive exclusion of the European red squirrel by the introduced American grey to the invasion of Australia by the cane toad. One merit of the book is that all examples are discussed from a multidisciplinary perspective. This approach is reflected in the list of authors, which includes economists, legal experts and policy and communication professionals. There is particular attention to policy, and the book discusses key aspects of the management of invasions, including analyses of risk assessment procedures and the pillars of a regulatory approach for invasive species, and the development of a European legal framework, with a detailed analysis of the decisions that led to the adoption of a European Regulation on invasive species, which entered into force in January 2015 after the completion of this volume.

Finally, the editors draw general conclusions and propose recommendations for decision makers. They explain that the struggle against invasive species is based on the robust evidence that non-native species are more harmful than native organisms, and that 'science reaffirms species origin as a valid, pragmatic, and relevant basis for invasive species policy'. They also stress that invasive species policy needs unifying and propose a bioethical basis to guide action.

This excellent book examines a complex issue, helping bridge the gap between policy and science, and steering global action against invasive species based on a synthesis of the relevant disciplines. The final paragraph stresses that although we have the knowledge and tools to alter the patterns and impacts of invasions, to progress we need to address the principal challenges, which are cultural rather than technical.

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