

Publications

Invasive Aliens: the Plants and Animals from Over There that Are Over Here by Dan Eatherley (2019) 336 pp., William Collins, London, UK. ISBN 978-0-00-826274-7 (hbk), GBP 16.99.

Most people in Britain (the 'Here' in the book's title) are no doubt aware of the existence of invasive species in the country, if only through news items about threats to their person or property from giant hogweed or Japanese knotweed, for example. But how many realize, or would care even if they did, the sheer scale and cost of the problems posed by 'the plants and animals from over there that are over here'—the subtitle of Dan Eatherley's book? I would challenge anyone to read this text and come away without caring, because of the emotions it may stir—perhaps astonishment, shock, helplessness and the occasional ray of hope. As Eatherley himself confides 'It's hard to escape the conclusion that we're fighting a losing battle with most invasive species', and indeed I suspect many readers will find this a depressing read, albeit an increasingly compulsive one. Just when you think you cannot take any more stories of ecosystem-wrecking plants, mammals, birds and amphibians that have been introduced by humans for all manner of mostly trivial reasons, it is hard not to want to find out what the beautiful harlequin ladybird has done to our beloved native ladybirds. Laid waste to them is the answer, incidentally.

This book has been thoroughly researched, and is dotted throughout with illuminating anecdotes about days spent in the field with scientists investigating alien species or volunteers doing their bit to control a damaging plant, invertebrate or mammal. I enjoyed the style of the text, and found it easy to read and digest, although sometimes I needed to put it down for respite, such is the onslaught of bad news after bad news. Increasingly I wanted to shout in frustration when Eatherley recounted yet another deliberate introduction that went horribly wrong. This was bad enough when the world was ignorant about the potentially calamitous impacts of alien species introductions, but even worse now that governments can have no excuses for allowing, or inadequately legislating against, yet more introductions.

Although alarm about invasive species is relatively recent, Eatherley demonstrates that introduced aliens have been liberally sprinkled by us around the world throughout human history, and even before that. But the number of invasives and the damage they cause increased dramatically with burgeoning interna-

tional trade, with colonization, and with our increasing fascination with exotic flora and fauna. Colonists were particularly, if unwittingly, guilty of some of the most catastrophic introductions, both to the colonies (so they could feel at home with the familiar in far off New Zealand, for example) and from them. Stately homes, royal hunting forests and eventually quintessential English homes and gardens became adorned with the exotic, most of which stayed put and behaved, and some of which became greatly valued and integral to modern existence. A life without potatoes and tomatoes, anyone? But some of the new arrivals threw off the shackles and made a break for freedom, often at the cost of native wildlife and in some cases (e.g. rhododendron and grey squirrels in the UK) to the real financial cost of later human generations.

Today, the rate of arrival of new species is breathtaking, and the results often heartbreaking. Globally, whole species of native animals have been lost forever, and in the UK hundreds of millions of pounds are spent annually in an attempt to limit the damage caused by everything from imported diseases (potato blight, ash dieback) to insects (Asian hornet, oak processionary moth) to plants (New Zealand pygmyweed, Japanese knotweed) and mammals (grey squirrel, American mink). It would be easy to construe this expensive onslaught as a campaign against some disarmingly attractive plants and animals, but of course that would be to misunderstand the issue. The conservationist-led operation to remove grey squirrels is not anti them, it is pro the native red squirrel, which is being banished by its larger, disease-carrying cousin. Invasive alien species often bring with them moral dilemmas in addition to other problems.

Throughout, the author maintains a neutral stance, giving us the unvarnished facts and allowing us to draw our own conclusions. But I admit to wishing that he would let the mask slip and reveal whether he would either defend the ramparts and join a volunteer party, perhaps to uproot Himalayan balsam, or decide that resistance is futile. The author's mask remained resolutely in place to the end, but this reviewer hopes that Eatherley was inspired by those who hosted him and spends some of his spare time helping, say, to save water voles (Ratty of A.A. Milne's *Wind in the Willows*) in his patch by managing a mink raft. We cannot win every battle, but we are winning some important ones, and much of the credit for that is due to the can-do attitude of citizen conservationists with which the UK is richly endowed.

This is an excellent book, well crafted and accessible. It will fascinate anyone who is interested in the British countryside, history, economy or way of life. Perhaps it should be required reading for every citizen not in this group, if only so they can be aware of how to avoid contributing, however unwittingly, to a developing crisis on this island of ours and indeed wherever they may travel.

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Rewilding edited by Nathalie Pettorelli, Sarah M. Durant & Johan T. du Toit (2019) 460 pp., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK. ISBN 978-1-108460125 (pbk), GBP 37.99.

Rewilding is receiving attention as an emerging field in conservation management and biology. It has also become clear that rewilding as a concept appeals to the public, politicians and the media, but the subject is equally likely to stir up controversy amongst local stakeholders and the scientific community. This book attempts to provide a global, scientific overview of rewilding to ground it as both a respectable science and a scalable solution in a changing world.

As one might expect from a new and controversial scientific field, the initial three chapters focus on definitions, history and framing of rewilding in both the scientific literature and the collective human experience. A common theme emerging throughout the book is the plasticity of rewilding as a concept. These chapters also raise interesting questions regarding how collectively humankind perceives nature and people as separate from each other, and go on to interrogate how this colonial approach to conservation affects social justice and access to nature.

Chapters 4–6 provide thoughtful explorations of the background, meanings and ambitions of four types of rewilding identified by the editors: Pleistocene, trophic, passive and ecological. These provide interesting introductions to each style of rewilding, offering the reader insightful commentary on their relationships with existing scientific theory and applied examples of each approach.

The second part of the book explores common challenges (chapters 12–15) and critiques facing rewilding in practice (chapters 16–19). The editors have taken care to address key themes and approaches common in rewilding projects, including carnivore reintroductions, translocations and urban rewilding, but I

cannot help but feel that the book has failed to capture some key concepts in the rewilding movement. For example, inclusion of case studies and approaches arising from peatland, freshwater and marine contexts would have broadened the scope of the book, as would the inclusion of other disciplines, specifically economics. A more in-depth exploration of urban approaches to rewilding, the role of invasive species management and land governance would also have been of great benefit, especially as conservation practitioners commonly describe the latter as a key predictor of conservation success.

What is clear from reading *Rewilding* is how much effort the editors have made to underpin rewilding theory with multidisciplinary perspectives, and therefore advocate for recognition within global debate beyond the conservation community. For example, much space is dedicated to social science subjects: the book contains fascinating sections exploring the psychology and framing of nature and offers useful context for people working on engagement and outreach. Much of the emphasis is, however, upon the benefits of rewilding to communities, which somewhat

skews some chapters—appearing to make a case for rewilding rather than providing a scientific critique.

It is somewhat disappointing to see rewilding explicitly framed as an animal issue by some contributors, despite many authors recognizing the influence of primary vegetation and herbivore interactions as a central tenant of rewilding. I feel the scope could have been widened to include non-animal wildlife, to avoid reinforcing the plant blindness common in much conservation biology.

From a Western perspective *Rewilding* is a welcome and helpful underpinning of rewilding science, and as such the editors certainly meet their primary objective, but many of the authors recognize that the text is unable to provide a universal and representative commentary on rewilding. This is entirely a result of research gaps across the sciences, particularly with respect to data representing the Global South. As a result, most of the content is unavoidably embedded within Western theory, and the book is arguably of the greatest relevance to rewilders working within a Western context, perhaps missing an opportunity to incorporate diverse voices.

Overall, *Rewilding* offers an excellent introduction to current rewilding theory and challenges readers to explore their own interpretation of and assumptions about rewilding practice. The book is an enjoyable and worthwhile read for anyone interested in rewilding, providing an informed introduction to the origins, perceptions and future trajectories of the movement. The editors do not quite meet their aim to provide a comprehensive global review but this is largely forgivable given the novelty of the subject matter and the associated data limitations. *Rewilding* showcases a cross section of multidisciplinary thought relevant to providing a scientific primer on rewilding practice. Furthermore, true to rewilding's mantra, this book presents a positive and uplifting vision of what could be, and how we could achieve a wilder Earth, by providing the reader with a healthy dose of conservation optimism expertly tempered with scientific enquiry.

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