Book Reviews

A Poison Like No Other: How Microplastics Corrupted Our Planet and Our Bodies by Matt Simon (2022) 252 pp., Island Press, Washington, DC, USA. ISBN 978-1-64283-235-8 (hbk), USD 30.00.

On opening the first page you will see that the author, Matt Simon, has dedicated his book to planet Earth: 'Sorry about the mess'. A fitting opening for a book about how we have managed to thoroughly plasticize our planet in less than a century. I read this book either side of attending the second meeting of the UN global plastic pollution treaty in Paris, a treaty to develop an international, legally binding agreement that will address the entire life cycle of plastics—from design to production and disposal—and aim to curb plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. Many countries support an ambitious treaty and seem committed to take this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to end plastic pollution. However, a powerful minority of oil- and plastic-producing countries advocate downstream solutions only, meaning measures that will allow plastic production to continue in a business-as-usual scenario. After reading *A Poison Like No Other*, it is hard to fathom how anyone could deny that we are in a serious plastic crisis, and how anyone could not want to do everything in their power to end the scourge of plastic pollution.

The book focuses on microplastics, defined as plastic particles that typically measure less than 5 mm. Such small plastic pieces are either produced in this size (e.g. as microplastic ingredients and plastics pellets), or are the result of the degradation and break-down of larger plastic pieces. Although most people are aware of unsightly plastic pollution on beaches, plastic waste clogging waterways and entangling wildlife, Simon explains that micro- and nanoplastic pollution is a problem that has long gone under the radar, largely unseen and thus ignored for too long. However, this is a crisis that the world is beginning to wake up to. The impacts of microplastics, as the author details, are far-reaching. He describes microplastics as 'the pernicious glitter that has bastardized the whole of Earth, a forever-residue from the party that is consumerism' (p. 3).

The book leads the reader on a voyage of discovery and demonstrates how microplastics have infiltrated every ecosystem. The opening chapter provides a clear and detailed description of plastics, including how they are produced from fossil fuels, the chemical and toxicological elements of different types of plastic and how they affect fauna, flora and human health. The following three chapters deep-dive into how microplastics have saturated the ocean, land and air, engaging and enraging the reader on the magnitude of the issue and changing how you look at everything around you: the food on your plate, the clothes you wear and the air you breathe—it makes for an utterly depressing read. But just when one starts to feel completely doomed and overwhelmed by the severity of the issue, Simon picks the reader up, acknowledging that although the topic is heavy, solutions will follow. As promised, the fifth and final chapter—albeit shorter than the rest—provides readers with much-needed positive solutions to the crisis. These focus on upstream actions that stem the flow of plastics into the environment, including capping plastic production, calling for more research into and full transparency about the chemicals used to produce plastics, and proposing taxes on plastic materials.

The book is science-led, but thankfully Simon's chatty tone makes the science behind plastic production, degradation and toxicological elements easily digestible and appealing to a broad audience. The narrative flows effortlessly from one topic to the next, consistently supported by scientific research and conversations with scientists and micro- and nanoplastic professionals. Although microplastic pollution is undoubtedly the central focus of the book, the connection between plastic pollution, climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental and human health is interwoven throughout.

The clear message from the book is that microplastics are everywhere, contaminating every ecosystem, community and species. *A Poison Like No Other* is a stark reminder that for too long society has been blind to this issue and systemic change is needed now. As negotiations continue between UN member states to create a new global treaty to end plastic pollution, I suggest that *A Poison Like No Other* should be listed as mandatory reading for all country delegates, in the hope that one day we no longer need to apologize to planet Earth about the mess.

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Hunting Wildlife in the Tropics and Subtropics by Julia E. Fa, Stephan M. Funk and Robert Nasi (2022) 300 pp., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK. ISBN 978-1-107-54034-7 (pbk), GBP 39.99. Also available: ISBN 978-1-316-33870-4 (e-book), open access, doi.org/10.1017/9781316338704.

My attention was drawn to *Hunting Wildlife in the Tropics and Subtropics* via a group e-mail that contained a brief summary of the book along with a call for reviewers. My maiden surname, Mandisodza, means 'to hunt' in Shona, an Indigenous language in Zimbabwe, and so I have long felt a natural curiosity towards anything to do with hunting. After agreeing to review the book, I was fortunate to attend an event featuring one of its authors, Julia Fa, who presented her work as part of a series of talks hosted by the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit in Oxford, UK. Fa spoke about her research, particularly highlighting case studies of hunting in the tropics and subtropics, which further deepened my interest in the subject.

The book examines the hunting of wild vertebrates in tropical and subtropical regions, predominantly for their meat, with a particular focus on the sustainability of this practice in the 21st century. People have hunted wildlife, including mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians, for millennia, not only for their meat as a source of protein, but also to obtain hides for clothing, bones for tools and musical instruments, and other animal-derived products for purposes as diverse as trophies and medicines. Although hunting historically had little impact on wildlife populations, today the increasing pressures from a growing human population, efficient hunting tools and habitat loss threaten many vertebrate species.

The book is structured into eight main chapters. The first two provide an introduction to eating wild meat, evolutionary and historical aspects, and the environmental backdrop of the tropics and subtropics as the focus of the book. This is followed by chapters providing accounts of the different modes of hunting, technologies used, cultural aspects and insights into optimal foraging theory and how this relates to human hunting of wildlife. Chapters 5 and 6 focus on sustainability and overexploitation, respectively. In chapter 7, the authors highlight the topical issue of wild meat and zoonotic diseases. This is an important subject and one that needs to be handled with care because of the close connections between wildlife and the rural and Indigenous peoples whose livelihoods are sustained by the consumption and trade of mammals, amphibians, birds and reptiles. The 8th chapter on closing the gap between knowledge and action is very informative and I think will be useful to policy makers and students in the conservation field.

One of the most important challenges relating to hunting is finding the balance between wildlife conservation and the needs of rural and Indigenous people. These are the people whose lives are shaped by wildlife

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