

Publications

Animal Traffic: Lively Capital in the Global Exotic Pet Trade by Rosemary-Claire Collard (2020) 200 pp., Duke University Press, Durham, USA. ISBN 978-1-4780-1092-0 (pbk), USD 24.95.

Animal Traffic: Lively Capital in the Global Exotic Pet Trade is a unique contribution to the existing robust studies about the legal and illegal wildlife trade. The uniqueness stems from Collard's theoretical framework as well as her fieldwork. I will discuss each of these in turn before talking about how these strengths could have been used more broadly. In regard to the theoretical framework, Collard grounds some of her thoughtful analysis in feminist political economy. This leads her to insightful musings about the socio-ecological reproduction of non-human animals. In essence, what are the social/cultural and environmental consequences for individual non-human animals, their communities and ecosystems, when these animals are—to use Collard's term—enclosed. Furthermore, Collard proposes that both commodity and animal fetishism are partly responsible for animals being objects of the global exotic pet trade. They are in demand because they are individual, controllable and encounterable, the latter referring to the tactile relationship humans have with non-human animals. These ideas raise important points and obstacles for addressing the global exotic pet trade. It is a strength of Collard's study that she includes and discusses demand reduction, and observes that the USA's total lack of engagement with demand reduction is problematic.

In terms of Collard's fieldwork, she undertakes a highly original ethnographic study that includes observations at live animal auctions at several locations in the USA, excursions on the Mexico–Guatemala border and volunteering at an animal rescue centre in Guatemala for a month. The combination produces interesting observations, particularly for geographical contexts that are largely ignored in the global discussions on legal and illegal wildlife trade. At her time at the auctions, Collard notes the tensions between the participants' beliefs they could act as they liked regarding animals and what that meant for those animals: 'But their freedom to buy and sell and own animals depends on animals' lack of freedom' (p. 88). She observes that at these auctions human values are dominant and with that comes the erasure of animals' histories—as commodities and as complex social beings.

To me, this thoughtfulness and sophisticated consideration could have been applied more broadly. For instance, in regard to the rescue centre in Guatemala attempting to return animals to nature, Collard rightly states: 'This

view of nature and wilderness is problematic not only for its colonial legacies but also for its treatment of animals as never belonging where "we" are, and as the passive objects to our own active subjectivity. ARCAS's [the rescue centre] practices, then, leave the exceptional and distinct human subject both materially and discursively undisturbed' (p. 117).

This raises three points that, had they been addressed, would have made the argument more powerful. Firstly, if releasing animals is problematic because of the colonial origins and because it is anthropocentric, what then should happen to these animals? This is not expanded upon. Secondly, here, and at numerous other points in the book, Collard mentions the colonial underpinnings of elements of the wildlife trade. But she never questions the language she uses—'exotic' 'pet' trade—when the word exotic in particular is problematic for its links to colonization. Other vocabulary could also have been scrutinized, such as enclosed, when this is only used for inanimate objects, and captured rather than kidnapped, which has been proposed by green criminologist Ragnhild Sollund (Sollund, 2019, *The Crimes of Wildlife Trafficking*, Routledge, Abingdon, UK). Thirdly, Collard questions here, and in other places, the notion that there could or should be places where non-human animals are apart from humans. She at once argues for 'the capacity of animals to lead wild lives, lives characterized by openness, possibility, a degree of choice, and self-determination, in which beings are understood to have their own familial, social, and ecological networks, their own lookouts, agendas, and needs' (p. 131), while at the same time saying 'This cannot be achieved by separating out a wilderness, a purely animal space' (p. 131) without acknowledging the contradiction inherent in this. The question whether the non-human animals do not want to be around humans, and want a space of their own, is not asked.

The points I have raised are obviously challenging obstacles to overcome in an effort to reduce animal exploitation. Collard clearly demonstrates in *Animal Trafficking* that she has much to contribute to these debates and in rethinking how human society regards non-human animals.

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Evolution, Ecology and Conservation of Lorises and Pottos edited by K. A. I. Nekaris & Anne M. Burrows (2020) 491 pp., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK. ISBN 978-1-108-42902-3 (hbk), GBP 74.99.

With 194 species and subspecies, the prosimians comprise 27% of living primates. The majority are lemurs (112), 32 are galagos, 19 are tarsiers, and 21 are of the Family Lorisidae: the pottos, five, and angwantibos, just two, in Africa, and the slender and slow lorises, 14, in Asia. This extraordinary and highly specialized radiation of nocturnal insectivores was for many years largely ignored: small, difficult-to-watch, and seemingly torpid little fur balls lacking ambition. With few exceptions—pioneers Simon Bearder and Pierre Charles-Dominique in particular—they failed to excite the fevered pursuits of anthropologists and primatologists through the 1970s and 1980s. But, as Bearder says in his foreword: 'Gradually, over the years, the number of researchers attracted by the delights of nocturnal primate research became significant'. As told by Anna Nekaris and Anne Burrows, it became clear that the Lorisidae's fascinating ways, habits and adaptations deserved a book.

Following a comprehensive introduction by the editors, the chapters are divided into three sections. The first, 'Evolution, morphology and the fossil record', starts with a brief history of the discovery, descriptions and distinctions of the four genera recognized today. The next chapter discusses the sparse (only seven species named), but nonetheless informative fossil record, with the earliest genus, *Namaloris*, dating from the Oligocene. The section includes seven essays investigating the functional morphology of various distinctive traits that are evidently significant in the lorises' nocturnal way of life. Three concern their sensory systems—sight (orbit orientation), smell (olfactory system anatomy and sensitivity) and touch (the ecology of face or vibrissal touch)—another looks at the soft tissue anatomy of the hand that is highly derived in the potto but less so in the slow loris, and a fifth at the biomechanics of their locomotion, involving so-called quadrumanous climbing and gripping, to move along, sit on, and hunt among thin branches in dense vegetation. Two chapters consider the adaptive morphology of the dental toothcomb. One concerns the fossil evidence from *Karanisia clarki*, the earliest strepsirrhine to possess one, concluding that it was used as a comb but also to scrape up gum. The other discusses the role of gum-feeding (unusual in primates, but a specialization for some) in loris evolution, examining the associated dental adaptations and signatures. This first section is rounded off by an excellent review of the evolution of the social behaviour that characterizes the Loriformes, including as such the galagos.

The second section focuses on behaviour, ecology and captive management. The first

chapter deals with the search for appropriate diets for captive lorises and galagos based on what is known of their feeding habits in the wild. A second discusses the history of lorises in captivity and the importance of zoo records, and a third reviews and recommends best practices for their breeding and husbandry. The ecology and behaviour section comprises eight chapters, covering behavioural research in the wild, including visual function and ecology, thermoregulation (lorises), home range and activity budgets, a general review of what is known of potto and angwantibo behaviour, positional behaviour and substrate preference, feeding and foraging of released Philippine slow lorises, ranging patterns of the pygmy slow loris in Cambodia, and mother–infant interactions and behaviour of captive Sunda lorises.

Lorises being small, often solitary, night-owls, a number of the chapters in the second section are revelatory in the creative methods used to study them in the wild: identifying them and following them to record their activities and diets, and their foraging, ranging and social behaviour. Five chapters in the third section, ‘Research, trade and conservation’, cover research methods: censusing, data collection, the sophisticated equipment and techniques used, and the precautions and care required in trapping and collaring them. Notable is a box that explains the need for the use of red light when observing them—white light disturbs them and probably damages their sensitive eyes.

All of the nine slow loris species, *Nycticebus*, are categorized as threatened on the IUCN Red List, two as Critically Endangered. The red slender loris *Loris tardigradus* of Sri Lanka is also Endangered, and the grey slender loris *Loris lydekkerianus* of Sri Lanka and India is, for the moment at least, considered Least Concern. Too little is known of the pottos *Perodicticus* and angwantibos *Arctocebus*, but the Benin potto *Perodicticus juju* is categorized as Endangered. Declines in their numbers result from the destruction of their habitats and from hunting for human consumption and the wildlife trade. Following a review of the distribution and conservation status of the pygmy loris and Bengal slow loris in China, the remaining five chapters cover the appalling international and domestic commercial trade in lorises for bushmeat and medicinal purposes, and as pets and photo props in social media, the latter particularly affecting the lorises. In South-east Asia, horrific numbers of slow lorises are cruelly traded in wildlife markets

for medicinal purposes. The chapters also cover the considerable efforts underway to combat this abuse and slaughter.

This is a benchmark compendium for our understanding of these creatures—a small but truly fascinating outpost of the primate radiation.

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Rewilding: The Radical New Science of Ecological Recovery by Paul Jepson & Cain Blythe (2020) 176 pp., Icon Books Ltd, Cambridge, UK. ISBN 978-1-785786273 (pbk), GBP 8.99.

Rewilding is a hot topic in conservation biology, policy and practice, and is seen to be at the cutting edge of modern conservation techniques. For many it offers a bold, new vision for the future and as a result is an expanding area of interest within scientific, public and political discourse. This publication, promoted as ‘the first popular book on the ground-breaking science’ intends to provide an account of the science behind rewilding.

The book opens with an enthusiastic, ambitious and upbeat tone that continues to permeate throughout the narrative, proving an uplifting read. This introduction is followed by chapters exploring theories related to grassland savannahs and the role of large herbivores within these systems. Here the authors present some compelling arguments and evocative dreamscapes of alternate realities. These early chapters are successful in highlighting the central importance of grassland ecosystems to a wider audience.

Chapter 4 briefly discusses many of the well-known case studies that those familiar with rewilding science might expect to see, followed by a series of chapters exploring a selection of interesting perspectives and well-researched theories from complementary sciences. Here the authors illustrate a fuller picture of rewilding as a concept, but largely rooted in western perspectives and grassland systems.

The narrative of this book is embedded within wilderness interpretations of rewilding, and stays within that realm. There is not much content on alternative rewilding approaches, other global perspectives, or an exploration of people’s place within the natural environment. However, much of this may have simply been

because of restricted page space. Chapter 9 is one of the most engaging; it discusses current challenges and opportunities for rewilding practitioners and demonstrates the complexity of turning theory into practice. The authors end with a chapter outlining their 10 predictions for the future—a logical and forward-looking ending, but one that perhaps fails to match the punch of the introduction.

What comes across strongly is the authors’ enthusiasm and belief in their interpretation of rewilding, so it is truly an account of rewilding from the first person perspective, as opposed to a more complete and objective review of all rewilding science. As a result, my overwhelming sense of this book is that it acts as a philosophical treatise on rewilding. It demands that the reader evaluates how they feel about the most radical ideas in rewilding science, and how much this perspective of rewilding represents the whole.

Throughout the book, the authors consciously place herbivores at the centre of the rewilding narrative, rather than their predators. They also avoid the controversy and critique inherent within the wider rewilding debate. Other underlying ideas take us back down the well-trodden path of intrinsic versus utilitarian perspectives of nature, which conservationists have been arguing about since at least the late 1980s. But there is also an unsettling ‘us vs them’ attitude permeating the book, which I found divisive. There are several misguided swipes at conservation biology and practice that come across as unreasonable.

In summary, this is a bold, yet technical book that reflects the optimistic and energetic mood of the rewilding movement. I found it forward-looking and informative, but narrow in its scope in terms of the systems, geographies and attitudes that it presents. Nonetheless, the authors deliver on their own account of rewilding, from a tranche of the movement in Europe.

Although readers would benefit from some technical grounding in conservation or ecological theory to get the most out of this book, for those seriously interested in rewilding it is a must read. It adds depth to the rewilding conversation, and I am sure any reader would find something new within its pages. Although it does not feel complete as a standalone book on the topic, it is certainly an interesting interpretation of a novel and changing subject matter.

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