

Publications

Bird Conservation and Agriculture by Jeremy D. Wilson, Andrew D. Evans and Philip V. Grice (2009), viii + 394 pp., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK. ISBN 9780521734721 (pbk), GBP 35.00; 9780521571814 (hbk), GBP 75.00.

This book sets out to summarize the extensive body of research on farmland bird conservation in Britain. It opens with a chapter on the history of agriculture in Britain, from the beginnings of woodland and shrubland clearance by Neolithic farmers, through the devastation caused to wetlands and open semi-natural habitats by drainage and enclosure, to changes in agricultural practice since the Second World War. All of these changes have had profound effects on the birds that managed to colonize, persist and even in some cases prosper in agricultural habitats. In the first of three main sections the authors describe in detail the bird communities of fields and field boundaries, as well as those of grazed semi-natural habitats such as heathland and downland.

The meat of the book is in the next two sections, summarizing the findings of half a century's research into the patterns and mechanisms of change in farmland bird populations. These include chapters on population trends, demographic responses to agricultural changes and practices, and 16 detailed species case studies, supported by helpful summary tables. With almost 1,000 references the book provides an exhaustive compendium of current knowledge. I found it a telling catalogue of both the power and the limitations of science.

On the one hand the case studies of corncrake, stone curlew and ciril bunting show how detailed research, followed by the testing and deployment of targeted measures, has successfully reversed population declines. On the other, these are only a fraction of the thousands of plant and animal species inhabiting the countryside, and despite decades of research and billions of Euros in agri-environment subsidies, wider deterioration of the populations of birds and other species has hardly been dented. I can't help feeling that we need a more ambitious approach to conservation, to augment that of species-specific tinkering.

There is a brief discussion of the objectives of conservation, which dismisses large-scale re-wilding as impractical and proposes the more modest aim of reversing the declines of species which were, until recently, familiar farmland species. I would

have liked more thoughtful discussion on this topic. There are good arguments for conserving recently-declining species: for their cultural and aesthetic values and for their usefulness as indicators of a healthy environment. However, there are also compelling arguments for more ambitious baselines: for restoring a few large-scale examples of the wet and wooded landscapes that would have characterized the British Isles before agriculture, for example. Might re-wilding in some places, and 'sustainable intensification' in others (Godfray et al., *Science*, 327, 812–818) be more effective than trying to combine crop production and conservation in the same fields?

Although their focus is largely on the latter approach, the authors raise this and other questions in the final chapter, laying out what they see as three key research areas for the future. What are the likely trade-offs and synergies between biodiversity conservation, food production and ecosystem service provision? To what extent, and at what spatial grain, should we aim to separate land for production and land for conservation? How will climate change affect our answers to those questions? These are important and multifaceted questions to which as yet there are few clear answers.

A further challenge is to integrate local, national and global conservation issues and priorities. The food we eat in Britain, the biofuel feedstocks we grow or import, and the land-use choices we make here, have direct and indirect effects on birds and other species in agricultural lands far beyond these shores. Grappling with globalization is largely beyond the scope of this book but for those looking for a thorough summary of what is known about conserving birds in British farmland *Bird Conservation and Agriculture* will be an important reference.

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Social Assessment of Conservation Initiatives: A Review of Rapid Methodologies by Kate Schreckenberg, Izabel Camargo, Katahdin Withnall, Colleen Corrigan, Phil Franks, Dilys Roe, Lea M. Scherl and Vanessa Richardson (2010), x + 124 pp., International Institute for Environment and Development, London, UK. ISBN 9781843697695, available

at <http://www.iied.org/pubs/pdfs/14589IIED.pdf>

The discourse on the links between the environment and development, between conservation and poverty, has a long history. The so-called people and parks debate on the purpose of conservation emerged as early as the 1950s, centred around the question of whether national parks should be established to protect species or to benefit people. International conservation policy was based on wildlife conservation through the establishment of protected areas that excluded people, or at least severely restricted their access to natural resources.

An increased focus on social justice in conservation emerged in the 1970s and, since the 1980s, attempts to address these issues have been made through community-based natural resource management and integrated conservation and development approaches. Debate on social impacts has largely centred on protected areas but has implications for a wider range of conservation initiatives.

Concern for social impacts has both ethical and strategic dimensions: ethical based on concern for human rights and social justice, and strategic because of links between social and conservation outcomes. For example, positive benefits from natural resources can act as an incentive to sustainable management and negative social impacts can reduce support for conservation at local and international levels.

There is therefore a clear need for, but dearth of, robust empirical evidence on the cultural and socio-economic effects of conservation initiatives. Aggregation and spatial and temporal comparisons are also hampered by the absence of a consistent, objective approach to identify and measure such impacts.

This publication is intended to be a first step in addressing the need for standard methods by reviewing more than 30 tools, methods and methodologies that have been used in a wide range of different contexts. It draws on the expertise of a number of major international conservation organizations and researchers brought together through a series of workshops, meetings and discussions under the Social Assessment of Protected Areas initiative.

The core narrative is readable and concise. Over half the content comprises references and useful appendices, including an overview of the tools and methodologies

reviewed, with complete references and web links where available. A basic typology identifies whether the tools were specifically related to protected area systems, were considered to have interesting elements relevant to rapid assessment of protected area impacts, or were deemed less relevant for this use. Succinct summaries of those considered most useful are also included. It thereby serves as a helpful source book for further research into a range of tools and methods.

From this review a framework methodology is presented that outlines key steps in the development of a rapid social impact assessment process. This framework in itself is a useful aid to practitioners and researchers in making decisions on what approaches and methods to use. The intention of the Social Assessment of Protected Areas initiative is that this publication will act as a working document for a future workshop to develop draft guidelines for rapid assessment methodologies. These would then be tested and adapted across a range of different locations.

This on-going initiative must surely be welcomed in the current context for biodiversity conservation in which international protected area policy emphasizes the need to address poverty and governance issues. The increasingly heated debate over the potential implications of avoided deforestation schemes on indigenous and local community rights makes it even more timely. While this review of methodologies is a useful first step, I await the output of the next stage of the initiative with bated breath.

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Arguments for Protected Areas: Multiple Benefits for Conservation and Use edited by Sue Stolton and Nigel Dudley (2010), 296 pp., Earthscan, London, UK. ISBN 9781844078806 (hbk), GBP 85.00; 9781844078813 (pbk), GBP 24.99.

Protected areas have been around for thousands of years in one form or another. Modern protected areas, what the authors call 'one of the best and most revolutionary ideas of the 20th century' began in the USA in the late 19th century. The number of formal protected areas has grown rapidly to cover 12% of the globe and there are ongoing efforts to achieve even fuller coverage of the world's habitats and species, in

particular marine areas. At the same time areas conserved by indigenous and local communities, often over centuries, are being recognized and supported.

Despite this, protected areas are in a crisis. They have been historically defined by their role in conserving wild animals and plants. Indeed, they are the crown jewels of the conservation endeavour. Unfortunately, they are failing to deliver and biodiversity is increasingly under threat. Many protected areas still exist only on paper, have inadequate resources for their management, and are threatened by illegal encroachment and resource use or by legal degazettment and economic activities such as mining.

As if that were not enough, protected areas are highly contested. The previously broad consensus on their value has broken down. Protected areas are resisted by industries, which see them as impediments to profit making, by governments that believe they limit economic development, and by communities who experience them as infringements on their rights. In short, protected areas are in trouble and the publication of this book is timely. The arguments for protected areas are not being made strongly enough or clearly enough, and this readable book seems destined to change that.

An introductory chapter describes how natural environments support human well-being, discusses the values that provide this support, and proposes the integration of these values into understanding of protected areas. A series of chapters follows, each discussing a specific value, benefit or service that protected areas provide or could potentially do so. The values covered are wide ranging and, although not new or surprising, most are not being actively managed for. This book, by presenting in a clear and accessible fashion 12 values of protected areas provides 12 arguments that can be made to local communities, governments and the international community for investing in protected areas. Not all values will be present in all protected areas but the idea that multiple benefits can be expressed in one place and time is important.

Considerable thought and planning has gone into the design of this book. The reader is led through a common argument for the different values, made possible as each chapter has the same structure. A short personal essay suggests the essence of the value to be discussed and smoothly leads the reader into the more technical sections that follow. The Argument section describes the value and the benefits it confers, the Current Contributions section

describes how and to what extent these values are conserved and delivered by protected areas, the Future Needs section describes steps required for protected areas to really engage with the value, and the Management Options section indicates how this can be achieved. A range of case studies and boxes brings home the arguments through tangible examples in which protected areas are delivering the broad range of values covered by this book.

The consistency and readability of the book is unusual in an edited volume, perhaps because the editors are also authors on all but one chapter. The broad grasp of the issues is just the kind of understanding that conservation practitioners must emulate. I commend this book to protected area managers, policy makers and all those arguing the case for protected areas and conservation. Students will find it invaluable as an introduction to protected area management. There is, however, some unevenness that is slightly disconcerting.

Chapters on the relationship between religion and protected areas and on the interactions between protected areas and cultural diversity introduce readers to a new way of thinking about conservation. By describing non-material, culturally based values, these chapters open a discussion of the relativity of values and question the current domination of scientific rationality and neo-liberal economics in conservation thinking and practice, and provide compelling arguments for looking at protected areas in a radically new way. The authors write that '...almost all protected areas are also cultural landscapes, with cultural significance for one people or another.' Failure to design and manage them accordingly has pitted conservationists against communities in an entirely negative and unnecessary way. Understanding protected areas as cultural entities would help resolve many of conflicts bogging down so many protected areas while supporting the conservation of cultures threatened by the same processes threatening biodiversity. It would also, as the authors note '...certainly help improve public support for conservation.' But despite signalling the paradigm-shifting importance of a values-based approach to protected areas, the rest of the book has the traditional focus on economic values. Even in chapters on health, tourism and human well-being, where a discussion of cultural values is clearly relevant, they are hardly noted. The resulting dependence on economic arguments suggests a degree of desperation pushing the authors away from the more radical reappraisal of protected areas that is perhaps needed.