

## BOOK REVIEW

**Conservation** (2nd edn) by Clive Hambler, C. & Susan M. *Canney*, *Cambridge*: Cambridge University Press, 2013, x + 416 pp, £27.99 (Paperback), ISBN 978-0-521-18168-6.

Conservation science has become a truly multi-faceted discipline, which requires students, scholars and professionals alike to be familiar with concepts from the spectrum of academic pursuits. As a result, producing a readable volume that effectively summarizes the pressing issues biodiversity is faced with and how they can be mitigated is no mean feat. First published in 2004, the new edition has been updated to reflect the changing nature of conservation science, acknowledging and understanding the strong linkages between people and their impacts on biodiversity, as well as their importance in determining how these impacts can be changed. There are a number of excellent titles that attempt to do this for a similar target audience, but the second edition of Hambler and Canney's text is definitely one of the better ones.

The introductory chapter of this book does well in "setting the scene", by providing the reader with a pertinent overview of conservation's development as a discipline and the reasons why we should conserve species. I particularly like the use of detailed tables in this chapter to illustrate the value of biodiversity from the perspective of wider society; who knew that an understanding of the wing case structure of darkling beetles had been used in biomimetic to aid the design of fog-harvesters for water? This excellent use of detailed tables, as well as numerous explanatory figures, continues throughout the book, which was pleasing to see. Despite the general upbeat

nature of this chapter, it invariably had to end on a rather depressing tone, with an explanation of extinction and the projected rates of future biodiversity decline.

Chapter two goes on to explain those factors responsible for decline and extinction, drawing on current and relevant examples to illustrate these issues. My only gripe with this chapter would be that the final section discussing synergistic interactions between all the factors mentioned previously, felt like a bit of a last minute inclusion. Given that most biodiversity threatened with extinction is likely to be impacted by multiple stressors, it might have been more useful to the reader to afford this section more word count.

The third chapter provides what might arguably be the most important discussion in this text on evaluating priorities for conservation. The authors do well in this chapter to summarize current thought on prioritizing at species, habitat and global levels, without incorporating their own personal proclivities. Instead, what this chapter does is provide an excellent starting point from which to identify how one might go about prioritizing what to spend those valuable conservation dollars on. If you were only going to read one chapter of this book – this one should be it.

Chapters four through eight represent the real ‘meat’ of this text. Once again each effectively explains and suitably illustrates a particular element of the discipline. Chapter four focuses on how to go about “assessing both quantity and quality of biodiversity”, whilst chapters five and seven discuss the theory behind, and process to, manage natural and human modified habitats. Chapter eight effectively discusses restoration in the context of conservation, providing relevant examples from a range of ecosystems. Chapter six discusses management at a species level and once again, is very well written. My only suggestion here is that the order of these chapters feels

somewhat alien. I would argue that the chapter on species management would be better placed before chapter four.

The final chapter entitled “Environmental Policy” effectively highlights the multidisciplinary nature of current conservation science covering; ethics, conservation psychology, public engagement, the economics of conservation and law. Whilst true to the discipline, covering this range of topics in a single chapter felt like the authors faced an uphill battle to maintain brevity without losing detail. I think this could have been split into two chapters, which might have allowed more case studies of conservation success stories to be presented, rather than the solitary case of the Mali elephants (pp 344-346). All in all however, this edition of *Conservation* is an approachable, authoritative and engaging viewpoint on current thinking within the discipline. As an undergraduate textbook this does fantastically well at highlighting the need for collaborative approaches across discipline boundaries to achieve conservation success. For non-students it provides a great resource to obtain a summary of current thinking across conservation science today.

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