BOOK REVIEWS

Conservation of Australia's Forest Fauna (second edition)

Daniel Lunney (ed), 2004
Royal Zoological Society of New South Wales, Mosman, New South Wales, Australia; ww.rzsnsw.org.au
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ROBERT E. FOX[1]

WHEN I reviewed the first edition of this volume I expressed the hope that there would be a second edition. However, had I any inkling of the prodigious amount of work which the second edition must have caused the editor Dan Lunney, I may have been a little less forthright. The first edition of *Conservation of Australia's Forest Fauna* published in 1991 created not only a treasure trove of relevant information but also a benchmark in Australian conservation. *Forest Fauna* 2nd ed. constitutes an updated and vastly expanded benchmark by presenting a snapshot of the contemporary state of forest conservation science in Australia.

This is not a book that can be quickly read in a quiet evening. At 3.4 kg and over 1 000 pages it consists of a formidable compendium of 62 scientific papers tackling a wide range of fauna conservation topics. In the Foreword (p. vii), W. F. Laurance of the Smithsonian Institute describes the book as providing "a cutting-edge sample of applied research focused on conserving Australia's unique forest biota".

The scope of the book has been enlarged from the first edition to include initially a landscape perspective of conservation, then the all important cultural perspective, evolution of forest policy and legislation and finally a couple of chapters on Australia's work on reforestation and revegetation. *Forest Fauna* is a book that one is likely to revisit repeatedly. Indeed the book should become the resource for all research workers, managers and policy makers involved in the management and conservation of Australian forests.

My copy is in paperback amply illustrated with photographs, maps and illustrations, presumably for cost reasons, in black and white only. The exception is a remarkable cover photograph of a leaping quoll. The contents pages list the 62 papers in four broad groupings:

Identifying the issues

Looking across the landscape

Single species studies

Managing forest fauna.

This not only provides a useful grouping of the diverse range of papers but an overall direction for the book. Daniel Lunney is obviously a skilled editor and has written the opening and closing chapters somewhat in the manner of a good chairman by firstly opening the dialogue then concluding by pulling the many strands together.

I am pleased to note the inclusion of the cultural perspective, as lack of such was a criticism I had of the first edition. Legg (Pp. 150–74) provides an interesting account of early European perspectives of Victorian forests by analysing references in 110 years of metropolitan newspapers. The analyses chart changing public perceptions from trying to recreate the Old World from 1839 through an increasing appreciation of Australian landscapes and biota to 1948. This change reflected the profound shift in national identity that occurred during the period from the late 1800s through to 1948 as a consequence of end of settlement expansion and two world wars. English's paper (Pp. 175–85) on Aboriginal values of New South Wales forests has relevance to most of Australia. It would be useful if a similar analysis could be undertaken in the Northern Territory where official recognition of aboriginal values and concepts in the Northern Territory predates the Mabo decision by over 20 years[2].

It is impossible within the limitations of a short review to provide informed comment on 62 papers. However, I can say with some authority that, irrespective of where you live and work within Australia, the book provides information that is relevant at a local level as well as that of regional and national context. The scientific value and quality is unquestioned and it is interesting that Laurance states in the foreword that "much of Australian conservation research is of world class standard — better, perhaps, than some Australian scientists realize". Laurance goes on to suggest that Australian biologists should take a leading role in New Guinea, Southeast Asia and the South Pacific Islands. Leaving aside political implications, I suspect many Australian biologists feel that they have more than enough to cope with at home.

The issue is not whether Australian science is of a high quality but how well are the decision makers in our society using that information. Flint *et al.* (Pp. 222–55) chart the "good, the bad and the ugly"

[2]English gives the impression that attention has been directed to Aboriginal land management concepts primarily post-Mabo. The first land rights legislation in Australia was introduced to the NT Legislative Council in 1966 (Legislative Council Debates 15 Dec 1965 to 8 Nov 1966) and eventually passed in 1969. This legislation was revoked in favour of the Commonwealth *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*. Land rights legislation was passed in some states during the 1980s. The Commonwealth *Native Title Act 1993* was the Commonwealth's legislative response to the Mabo (No. 2) judgement <http://www.nrm.qld.gov.au/nativetitle/faq/commonwealth_act.html>. Since 1976 at least, Aboriginal land management concepts and values have been a major focus for both Commonwealth and NT governments impacting across the entire spectrum of land use in the NT. Other than adding a further legislative dimension, the Native Title Act did not significantly enhance that focus in the NT.

[1]Ecofox Enterprises Pty Ltd., P.O. Box 2580, Palmerston, Northern Territory, Australia 0831. Email robfox@austarnet.com.au

of the interaction of science and the political process through the recent forestry reform in New South Wales. They emphasize that the need for independent (i.e., non government) scientific involvement is crucial to the scientific integrity of conservation outcomes and assessments conducted by Governments via bureaucratic processes. My personal experience is that opposition to the involvement of independent scientific involvement sometimes comes from scientists entrenched within government and/or industry. While their opposition may be partly justified on the grounds that much of the so-called independent comment coming from environmental organizations is biased and/or ill-informed, there is nevertheless room for improvement on both sides. Flint *et al.* (Pp. 222–55) have provided a thoughtful assessment of a complex and politically sensitive process that should be referenced to all senior bureaucrats and scientists. Norman *et al.* (Pp. 208–21) provide an analysis of the South-east Queensland Forests Agreement and Leary and Mamu (Pp. 186–207) outline the conservation status of Papua–New Guinea's forest fauna and the role of community planning.

I was pleased to see included a case study of how regulatory compliance can confound conservation policy leading to less than desirable conservation outcomes (Meek Pp. 256–69). Conservation policy in Australia tends to be dominated by the need to protect climax ecosystems and rarely is the role of disturbance recognized as necessary for maintenance of seral species. This should not be a novel revelation as deliberate disturbance of wetlands by grazing has been a common management practice in the maintenance of United States waterfowl populations for decades. More recent work in northern Australia is indicating that the healthiest populations of certain macropods seem to occur in eucalypt woodlands heavily grazed by cattle.

It is good to note the inclusion of many papers on non-totemic species (i.e., forest trees, birds and mammals). *Forest Fauna* contains a range of papers on invertebrates, amphibians and reptiles, which go some way to filling out the faunal spectrum. Stanisic and Ponder (Pp. 127–49) note in their paper on forest snails that 99% of forest fauna not only lacks a backbone but collectively plays a far more important role in the functioning and health of ecosystems than vertebrates.

With respect to this book, the pertinent question is will the assembled information be used to the greatest effect? That is a greater challenge than collating and editing. Dan Lunney has done a mighty job in pulling this information together into a useful and relevant resource volume. It is now up to our professional groups, those of us in positions of influence, indeed all of us, to use this book to provide authoritative advice to wherever it can be of value. The question then becomes one of where. For instance will the Prime Minister, his Cabinet Ministers or their senior advisors read this book? Highly unlikely. Will the CEOs of government and industry read this book? Again highly unlikely. This is the nub of the problem. Flint *et al.* (Pp. 222–55) cited the inability of scientists to directly influence political process in any real way as being a reason for the New South Wales forestry reform not achieving certain conservation outcomes. Perhaps a little lateral thinking might assist.

We all are familiar with the situation where organizations tend to overlook their in-house experts but listen to outside consultants. Daniel Lunney has provided us with the ultimate consultant — unquestionably authoritative, well documented and at remarkably little cost! In that sense I thoroughly recommend *Conservation of Australia's Forest Fauna* (second edition) not only to research workers but also to all stakeholders in forest fauna conservation.

One with Nineveh: Politics, Consumption and the Human Future

Paul and Anne Ehrlich, 2004.
Island Press/Shearwater Books, Washington, DC.
376 pp. ISBN 1 55963 879 6
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FRANK TALBOT[1]

"Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!"

(Rudyard Kipling's 'Recessional', 1897)

THE Ehrlichs' title refers to Nineveh, once a rich and glorious city on the Tigris River, but now a group of dirt mounds in the desert . . . will we learn the environmental lesson, or repeat the history? This scholarly new book demonstrates again the ability of Paul and Anne Ehrlich to dig wide and deep into the literature of our social and environmental problems, to sift for the facts of change, and to piece a resulting mosaic together. On the resource side, the picture they create speaks in up-to-date detail of nearly universal environmental deterioration; of water, soil, biodiversity and atmosphere. Our resource use is out of step with our environment's capability, and we are steadily damaging it. On the social side the picture points to the mismatch between the dominant culture's view of the world and the world revealed by scientific analysis. The careful picture the Ehrlichs build speaks to all of us, on every continent, and warns us that our cultures cannot continue like this. While the story is harsh, they also study solutions, physical and social, and these are as much at the heart of this book as their statements on looming problems.

They give us a state of the art look at those great drivers of environmental difficulties . . . increasing population and increasing consumption

[1]Graduate School of the Environment, Macquarie University, New South Wales, Australia.