



Book Review

All Asian Primates

By S. Beauséjour, A. B. Rylands and R. A. Mittermeier
2021, Published by Re:wild & Lynx Edicions, Barcelona.
536 pp.
2.3 kg
Price 55€ or AUD \$87 ISBN 978-1-7372851-1-3

Sylvain Beauséjour is a naturalist and a graphic designer who has designed over 60 books. He authored a book on the native orchids of Quebec and Labrador (Beauséjour 2008). Dr Anthony Rylands is the Primate Conservation Director at Re:wild, an international conservation organisation. He received his doctorate at Cambridge, UK and is currently the Editor of *Primate Conservation*. Dr Russell Mittermeier received his doctorate from Harvard University in 1977. He has authored more than 700 articles and 42 books; he is currently Chief Conservation Officer at Re:wild and is Chair of the IUCN SSC Primate Specialist Group. These authors are well qualified to lead this significant book.

This book is somewhat enigmatic, it is certainly not a field guide nor an encyclopedia on primates though it has properties of both. It has too much detailed taxonomy and delves too deeply into the threats that each taxon faces to be a coffee-table book. Finally, I decided it was a *call to arms*, a photographic guide and first stop reference. Its aim appears to be as a descriptive resource on all the Asian primates. Its focus is on the threats they face and their conservation. The framework drawn upon to present the taxa is analogous to a field-guide with pictures and details on the facing pages. But this is where the similarity ends. You can immediately see the hand of the book's graphic designer, Sylvain Beauséjour, with a close-up, large facial photograph of each taxon montaged with males, females and young in their natural habitat merged seamlessly behind; the expert merging creating realistic images.

The book encompasses 131 species with 26 recognised subspecies, in all 193 taxa including the different pelage colour forms of various species and subspecies when required. A colour distribution map and short introductory text and a listing of taxa introduce each chapter. Chapters are organised by family; there are five families. Each species or subspecies is given: its own colour map also

showing relief, its range is detailed in text underneath, unusually good notes are given on taxonomy, detailed outlines of the threats specific to each taxon and finally there are some comments on conservation along with a QR code that links to the IUCN Red List. All these sections are appropriately referenced. The maps are zoomed in to the relevant part of Asia and simple to understand. Towards the end of the volume the taxa are listed again under the heading Classification by Country. This is done using sub-headed thumbnail pictures under the heading of the country. There are 22 countries covered.

The audience addressed by the book must be an academic one due to the data presented, but a more general audience is assumed given the montage of photographs that cover the entirety of its left facing pages for each taxon. The obvious strength of this book is in the photography. There are close-up facial photographs of every taxon, each supported by photographs of the young and both sexes. These photographs are taken from their natural environment with natural attitudes and not from images of captive animals. The taxonomy is another strength with more detail than I have seen in most other guides. Since it is not an encyclopedia it lacks information on the ecology and behaviour and I suggest that this is a weakness of the book. The maps are another strength; they are clear and easily and clearly understandable. They are beautifully presented with brightly highlighted areas showing the taxon's range. However, the red highlighted ranges on green land masses may be a problem for the many red-green colour-blind readers of the book. There is also a good appendix and each chapter (family) is begun with a full-page map and a contents with small thumbnail pictures sub-headed with species and subspecies names.

The objective of this book must be to educate and inform both professional and general readers. Thus, its well prepared layout and its many informative elements, including putting

all the Asian primates in a single volume, is surely to substantially aid the primate discipline. It will act as a starter and a quick reference guide to researchers and no doubt be a page turner to an audience amazed at the primate biodiversity unearthed in its pages. Despite the detail in places the photographs will encourage general readers and they will thus learn more from looking it over. The text is laid out formally for professionals to follow quickly. However, a general readership will learn as they read. This organisation of easy to access information does advance the book, but the lack of ecological and behavioural data is glaring. The research that has gone into the text is of the highest standard and well referenced. A complete bibliography concludes each of the family sections rather than having a larger one at the end of the volume. The classification by country section, which follows immediately after the species section, provides another practical tool for those interested. Like the contents pages for each family it is presented as a series of sub-headed thumbnail pictures.

The quality of the supplementary material, assuming that the photographs can be considered supplementary, is extremely high. Primates are considered animals of great beauty by *Homo sapiens* readers and so many high quality

photographs will not disappoint. The maps, particularly those for each family are brightly colourful and highly practical, their high aesthetic value adding to the generally high aesthetic appeal of the book.

Overall this book is both beautiful and practical. It is the first book comprising all the Asian primates, all 193 taxa. This alone will surely interest primate workers. The biodiversity presented in such intimate detail will no doubt engage school-age readers and those just glancing through its pages. Thus, it will make a great coffee-table book, but it is so much more. I recommend it to anyone interested in primates, especially researchers.

Graham R. Fulton

Centre for Biodiversity and Conservation Science,
University of Queensland, Brisbane, Qld, Australia
and

Environmental and Conservation Sciences, Murdoch
University, Murdoch, WA, Australia.

References

- Beauséjour, S. (2008) Les Orchidées indigènes du Québec/Labrador. (Éditions Native: Joliette, Québec)

Conflicts of interest. The author declares no conflicts of interest.