

# Book reviews

The more optimistic will hope that such essays signify movement towards greater awareness that rural people should participate in shaping their own environments and future.

*Jonathan Kingdon, Department of Zoology, Animal Ecology Research Group, South Parks Road, Oxford, UK.*

## **The Bird of Time: The Science and Politics of Nature Conservation**

N.W. Moore

Cambridge University Press, 1987, 290 pp., HB £27.50, PB £9.95

In the spring of 1977, the Nature Conservancy Council (NCC) published its long-awaited policy statement *Nature Conservation and Agriculture*. The 1960s and early 1970s had seen the debate between the farming industry and conservation at its sharpest, particularly over the issue of persistent pesticides, so that the measured reception that was accorded the NCC report by both sides of the dialogue was all the more remarkable. The credit for keeping the dialogue going and for preventing the whole debate from degenerating into profitless polemics belongs largely to the author and chief architect of the document, Norman Moore.

In *The Bird of Time*, Dr Moore has now given us his own personal view of the achievements of nature conservation over the last 35 years. The book is essentially in three parts. The first, more or less covering the period when he was Regional Officer for SW England, explores how the Nature Conservancy evolved a policy for Britain's national nature reserves and SSSI designation, and includes an account of the author's own classic work on the use of ecological indicator species to assess the effects of fragmentation on the ecology of the Dorset heaths. The second part of the book is a fascinating and revealing account of the whole agriculture-conservation debate with which the author was so closely identified. Finally, Norman Moore shares with us his thoughts on the future. Here is much challenging stuff. For example, the conclusion that the only way in which the machinery of government can be made more effective about conservation is to abolish the agriculture

departments and set up a new Department of Land Resources. Not a new idea perhaps, but the source of the support gives one food for thought.

*The Bird of Time* is by far the best account that has appeared on nature conservation in Britain over the last 35 years. It is a balanced, objective story, uncluttered by scientific jargon, and provides an indispensable perspective for all those newly involved in the subject.

*David Streeter, Dean of the School of Biological Sciences, University of Sussex, UK.*

## **The Ecology of Sumatra (Second Edition)**

Anthony J. Whitten, Sengli J. Damanik, Jazanul Anwar and Nazaruddin Hisyam.

Gajah Mada University Press, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, 1987, 583 pp.

Available in Europe from Foris Publications, Dordrecht, Netherlands; Heffers Bookshop, Cambridge, UK. In Australia and New Zealand from Dutch Indonesian Books, Mooroodah Highway, Croydon, Vic. In Singapore and Malaysia from Select Books, Tanglin Shopping Centre, Tanglin Road Singapore. In the Americas from Sinauer Associates, Sunderland, MA 01375-0407, USA. Price US\$22 (PB), US\$35 (HB). In case of difficulty the publishers should be contacted: GAMA Press, PO Box 14, Bulaksumur, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

*The Ecology of Sulawesi*, a review of which appeared in The October 1987 issue of *Oryx*, is also available from these addresses. The price is US\$25.00 PB and US\$35.00 HB (except in the US where the HB costs US\$50.00).

For those who know the first edition of this book, published in 1984, the only new material in the second edition is a list of 74 references that have appeared since that date or were missed by the original literature search.

For those who do not know this book, it is divided into three parts. The first sets the geological, historical and biogeographical background to Sumatra. The second is devoted to discussion of the major natural ecosystems to be found. After the reputed dangers to fieldworkers of tigers, snakes and leeches have been dispelled, there follow detailed accounts of mangroves and other coastal ecosystems, rivers and lakes, various lowland rain forest formations, mountains and finally caves. The third part deals with the human impact on the ecology of Sumatra and includes suggestions of small pro-

*Oryx* Vol 22 No 3, July 1988

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jects for Sumatran amateur naturalists. The whole treatment is comprehensive (nearly 1200 references cited) and liberally illustrated with some marvellous colour photographs and a lot of average-to-poor figures. The text is consistently simple, lucid and highly informative. Everyone with interests in South-East Asian biology should have access to a copy. It is such a pleasure to read that I am sure it would make a fine companion to Wallace's *The Malay Archipelago* in any (armchair) traveller's library.

Yet in preparing a thorough account the authors have produced more than a book of purely local interest. Generally concepts are clearly explained when they are introduced and many examples are taken from Peninsular Malaysia, Borneo and further afield, making it an excellent introductory work for students and teachers of the ecology of the humid tropics. It is one of those rare books that teaches without the reader feeling he is being taught; and we all still have much to learn about the tropical rain forest.

*Ian Turner, Oxford Forestry Institute, Department of Plant Sciences, University of Oxford, UK.*

## **A Guide to the Fishes of Lake Malawi National Park**

Digby Lewis, Peter Reinthal and Jasper Trendall  
World Wildlife Fund, Gland, 1986, 71 pp. HB US \$14, PB US \$10, plus postage. Obtainable from National Fauna Preservation Society of Malawi, c/o PO Box 46, Monkey Bay, Malawi. (All proceeds go to conservation projects in Malawi.)

The cichlid fishes of the African great lakes are among the biological wonders of the world; studies of their ecology and behaviour are illuminating how new species evolve. Many of the most colourful forms are now well known as aquarium fishes.

This splendid guide is a 'must' for all who can visit Malawi or who wish to learn more about how these cichlid fishes live in their natural habitats. Illustrated throughout with colour photographs, the text, couched in non-technical language, describes underwater habitats, the habits of the 'mbuna' rock-dwelling fishes and

other cichlid and non-cichlid species found in the various regions of the park, and touches on the other fauna, from the numerous birds and hippos, to traditional fishing methods.

The numerous photographs of this beautiful lake with its alternating sandy shores and rocky coasts include many underwater pictures showing clearly how many species live together, cichlid 'nests' and mouth-brooding parents taking up their young. Colour portraits of over 88 kinds of fishes found in the park aid in fish identification. A removable inset guides visitors round two underwater nature trails.

The Government of Malawi is to be congratulated in the establishment of this National Park (in 1980), which now has World Heritage Status. This example needs to be followed for Lake Tanganyika, which also has spectacular endemic faunas and where pollution from lake basin developments is likely to become a threat. The fragility of these faunas has been emphasized by the decimation of Lake Victoria's cichlids since the introduction of the piscivorous Nile perch (*Lates niloticus*).

The production of this book should do much to encourage visits to this National Park. If you want to see cichlids in nature this is one of the very best places to do so.

*Rosemary Lowe-McConnell, Formerly Overseas Fisheries Research Service.*

## **Book service**

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