

BOOK REVIEWS

doi:10.1017/S0376892910000469

Environmental Crime. A Reader

EDITED BY ROB WHITE

xvii + 743 pp., 24.5 × 17.5 × 4 cm, ISBN 978 1 84392 512 5
paperback, GB£ 32.99, Cullompton, UK: Willan Publishing, 2009

It is evident that we are rapidly surpassing ecological thresholds and the limits of natural systems. Recognition of this fact is reshaping the academy. Disciplines that have historically devoted scant attention to environmental problems are now beginning to examine these concerns in earnest, and in doing so, are changing how we study, describe and understand our shared ecological plight.

Environmental Crime by Rob White reflects this shift. In this reader, which consists of thirty-six previously published articles, White pushes the boundaries of criminology by providing a comprehensive philosophically-complex examination of environmental crime and green criminology, a subfield in the discipline that addresses issues tied to environmental harm and ecological justice. The articles he has assembled are drawn from an array of disciplines, making this work one of the most diverse discussions of green criminology to date.

White has organized the book into three sections: 'Conceptualizing environmental crime', 'Dynamics of environmental crime' and 'Environmental law enforcement.' While the large number of articles in this book makes it impossible to comment on each, all are consistently thought provoking and insightful: White has skilfully surveyed the subject's terrain.

The central objective of the first section of the book is to examine how various theoretical and philosophical debates shape the way we view and respond to environmental crime. To that end, it begins with a chapter on ecophilosophies by Halsey and White. In it they explore how anthropocentric, biocentric and ecocentric philosophies organize perceptions of environmental harm. To begin to effectively address environmental crime, as they argue, we must first acknowledge and then question the assumptions that underpin our belief systems about interrelations between people and nature. In a similar vein, Benton makes the case that we should move towards a non-anthropocentric ethic that would recognize the inherent value and rights of non-human species.

Several of the chapters in the first section address how societal power relations inform the definition, character and regulation of environmental crime. Friedrichs and Friedrichs, for instance, discuss how powerful global institutions like the World Bank have exploited both the environment and the poor within developing nations. Lynch and Stretesky, in turn, examine how corporate power has influenced perceptions of environmental harm and green criminology.

The second section of the book turns to an overview of various types of environmental crime, ranging from lobster poaching to the illegal dumping of hazardous e-waste. Although often overlooked in discussions of environmental harm, White takes aim at the USA federal government, one of the largest polluters in the world, by including several chapters that review its toxic legacy. Santana's chapter on the US navy's environmentally destructive bombing of Vieques (Puerto Rico), for example, skilfully reveals Washington's

complicity in environmental harm. Walter's chapter outlines how the USA has put pressure on African nations to accept genetically modified corn from USA farmers.

White should be credited for providing a useful review of many different forms of environmental crime. However, he does not include any of the recent articles that discuss the predicted impact of climate change on various forms of crime, such as violence, smuggling and trafficking. Since climate change is the most pressing environmental problem, this omission is noteworthy.

The absence of any substantive examination of gender issues in the second section of the book is another significant concern. Although several of the chapters discuss environmental justice, they tend to focus on inequalities tied to class and race. Scholars writing in critical geography, political ecology and poststructuralism have developed analyses that explore the relationship between gender and environmental justice, but green criminology has, in large part, marginalized questions of gender.

The final section of the book examines the prevention and enforcement of environmental crime. Although the chapters address different issues, one message resonates across each: environmental crimes have not been treated seriously by the criminal justice system. Brack, for example, discusses transnational crime and examines why security officials devote scant attention to the issue. White includes several chapters that explore ways to prevent environmental crime, such as through satellites to uncover illegal logging and market reduction approaches to diminish demands for illegal endangered animals. While perhaps beyond the scope of the section, a chapter on the precautionary principle may have been useful, given that it can foster conditions where we have less toxic material to criminally mishandle.

On balance, White succeeds admirably in providing an exceptionally thorough examination of the emerging field of green criminology. This work will no doubt provoke further interest in environmental crime, which warrants urgent attention. As White reminds us, 'the time to 'see, judge, act' is now.'

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doi:10.1017/S03768929100004X

Too Smart for Our Own Good: The Ecological Predicament of Humankind

BY CRAIG DILWORTH

xv + 530 pp., 24.5 × 17 × 2.5 cm, ISBN 9780521757690 paperback,
GB£ 19.99, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010

In the 1950s, the distinguished limnologist G. Evelyn Hutchinson was invited to give a seminar at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, USA. I was asked to determine the compatibility of his slides with the Academy's projector. Slide 1 was two monkeys, one holding a lantern; slide 2 was a depiction of the onset of the menstrual cycle in Swedish women; slide 3 was a sketch of a Dodo. Other slides in the group were equally unrelated. I could not imagine