

Publications

Drawing the Sea Near: Satoumi and Coral Reef Conservation in Okinawa by C. Anne Claus (2020) 264 pp., University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, USA. ISBN 978-1-5179-0662-7 (pbk), USD 25.00.

C. Anne Claus presents *Drawing the Sea Near: Satoumi and Coral Reef Conservation in Okinawa* as an ethnography of a WWF field office, interspersed with anecdotes of local life illustrating the meaning of the local seascape through community eyes. This combination transports us to a music studio, snorkelling amongst corals, honouring ancestors at the festival of the sea and communing with gods and ghosts. Key to the discussion is the concept of *Satoumi*—a cultivated seascape created by human and non-human actions, bringing together nature, culture and people. This is described as a contrast to the ideal of wilderness maintained separate from human interaction, and considers people as integral stewards of their environment. There is a strong focus on contrasts within this book: local vs transnational conservation, the Coral Village field station vs WWF Japan, Okinawan culture vs Japanese culture, and competition between methods of conservation. One of these debates revolves around so-called conservation-far and conservation-near practices, which raises issues around protectionism and fortress conservation. Conservation-near is embodied by interaction with nature on many levels—touch, smell, taste—and this is where the interactions of Okinawan life are most vibrantly rendered. Ultimately, this ethnography highlights the struggle between local, national and international conservation ideas and priorities.

Along the way, I learned a lot about the history of Okinawa, and of Japanese ways of thinking about conservation. In addition to finding out about this particular setting and the projects that were implemented, I got to know some of the community and their interests. I also gained insights into WWF's ways of working and the relationship between this local office and the global organization. These lessons are valuable for anyone working within a large conservation organization, and especially those who work on, or are interested in, local or community-based projects. The author conjured up vibrant and beautiful images in my mind of the famous blue coral, the bright blue waters and the colourful community members; however, this is not a book on coral conservation as such, and it does not focus on any particular species or research in detail. The most illuminating part of the book, for me, is the final chapter, which describes the

popularity of amateur coral restoration efforts locally and how these practices are viewed unfavourably by the scientific community. There is an interesting anecdote from a local restorer that highlights the elitism and lack of inclusiveness sometimes present within conservation. Overall, this book does not claim that the processes highlighted could, or should, be implemented elsewhere, but rather gives food for thought on the nature of conservation and how it can be implemented equitably through diverse mechanisms.

I would recommend the book to readers on a number of levels—those interested in coral conservation, in Japanese views of the sea or in locally-based action. It will also be of value to anyone interested in thinking more widely about the roots of conservation and how it is relevant in the modern world. The author frames the successes of Coral Village as a perfect storm of opportunity that is bound within the local setting, yet is also able to draw out the learning that is relevant to conservation globally and raises questions that should be debated by us all. This ties in with the current societal focus on the inclusiveness of conservation and whether we have come far enough from our colonial roots. Perhaps we need to look outside ourselves more and take the opportunity to reframe our mindsets, Claus posits, raising the ultimate question: what is conservation and who is it for?

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Leaving Space for Nature: The Critical Role of Area-Based Conservation by Nigel Dudley & Sue Stolton (2020) 194 pp., Routledge, Abingdon, UK. ISBN 978-0-367407537 (pbk), GBP 34.99.

'Everyone needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul.' These words by John Muir, the Scottish-American environmentalist, seem even more poignant today than a hundred years ago, when he wrote them. Not only was Muir a great proponent of the interconnectedness of all life, he was also the famed Father of National Parks, having played a pivotal role in the designation of Yosemite in 1890. It is fitting then, in these pandemic days as we struggle to manage our relationship with wildlife, that authors Nigel Dudley and Sue Stolton salute him in their new book *Leaving Space for Nature: The Critical Role of Area-Based Conservation*.

Stalwarts of the protected area movement for more than 2 decades, the authors have penned an unassuming gem that seeks to provide a 'contemporary assessment of area-based conservation and its implications for nature and society' (back cover). More prosaically perhaps, they have produced an eloquently written and thorough review of the history, issues and arguments surrounding site-based conservation and especially protected areas. In this social media generation of quick soundbites and binary opinions, this book resolutely covers almost everything one needs to know about site-based conservation, warts—and nuances—and all. For that alone it is to be highly recommended.

Whatever one's political leanings or professional agenda, a glance at *Google Earth* shows that protected areas do work, at least in some way. They have helped shape and protect nature for almost a thousand years. My own surname can be traced back to William the Conqueror's forest manager, charged with protecting northern England's hunting estate in the late 11th century. As Dudley and Stolton admit, there are aspects of their book that may upset some people. However, this lends their arguments credence. Conservation in its real sense is a practice that almost everyone believes they understand, correctly or otherwise. Vehement opinion is often hurled at its practitioners with equal weight by experts and amateurs alike. The authors' treatment demonstrates just how much they do understand conservation, in all its glorious shades of grey.

The book begins with three chapters of scene setting. The second part tackles the fundamental issues of definition, priority setting and targets, and part three faces the realities of threat, value, effect and cost. Pleasingly, the final section looks in more detail at what is next, and sets out the authors' own vision for the success of area-based conservation. Without wishing to set off the spoiler alert, their proposals, broadly covering six key facets of conservation, are all practical and feasible.

The biggest weakness of the book comes through no fault of the authors, who presumably wrote the text before the world changed in 2020. Dudley and Stolton have gone to great lengths to cover as many of the threats, challenges and funding mechanisms associated with protected area management as possible. However, they could not have predicted that the biggest existential threat in over 100 years was around the corner. The impacts of COVID-19 are now being felt, and will be for many years to come. The loss in revenue to protected area authorities from a collapse in tourism, and to conservation organizations