

give a nod to indigenous peoples in the so-called North' in her larger body of research. In fact, this collection (or set of explorations) is uneasily situated in international relations conversations (Myanna Lahsen's chapter in particular). Nonetheless, this edgy aspect to the project embodies many of the complex contestations that intersect and move within these issues of power, knowledge, norms, discourses and climate change. I suspect this low-intensity dissonance is by design. While the attention paid to the theoretical divisions within constructivism risks reifying what is operationally often a matter of emphasis, this restlessness in the book works well overall.

The editor is clearly sensitive to a number of issues as she pre-figures many potential critiques in the Introduction. She writes '...the book cannot contain all possible perspectives...we urge others to learn from our efforts and to generate further studies, comparisons and constructive suggestions...'. She is correct. Nonetheless, while her own self-evaluation rightly calls for analyses of other contexts, such as Africa and Asia, I found that biophysical agency was remarkably underconsidered. The book could have benefited from more consistent accounting of this unmistakably vital 'actor'. Moreover, greater attention paid to the varied natural science processes shaping understanding of climate change (along with social, political and cultural factors) in the theatre of discursive structuration would have further strengthened the volume. As it stands, analyses of the variegated role of biophysical processes in the social construction of climate change are awkwardly obscured. While Nicholas Onuf notes this heterogeneity in the Foreword, it is not consistently carried through the book.

In highly contentious neo-millennial environmental challenges such as climate change, social constructionist approaches need to be scrupulous in order to minimize sparking illusory and counterproductive debates. While such interventions seek to enhance understanding of complex and dynamic human-environment interactions, misuse (catalogued voluminously through time) instead can enhance obfuscation.

Amid these dangers, I found that the present collection very successfully navigated around these potential pitfalls by treading that treacherous 'middle ground' between positivism and pure subjectivity, and provided an incisive and illuminating series of papers. Thus, meeting the editor's aforementioned goals many times over, the volume provides highly informative and valuable building blocks for understanding of power-knowledge interactions as they relate to climate change. With a critical edge, these contributions trace shifts in discourses and policy considerations, while they help to anticipate future changes in various contexts and social settings.

MAXWELL T. BOYKOFF
Environmental Change Institute
James Martin Research Fellow
University of Oxford, UK
e-mail: maxwell.boykoff@eci.ox.ac.uk

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Vietnam: A Natural History

BY ELEANOR JANE STERLING, MARTHA MAUD HURLEY AND
 LE DUC MINH; ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOYCE A. POWZYK

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 Yale University Press, 2006

Vietnam is rich in cultural, biological and geological diversity, conjuring images of expansive forests, mangrove deltas, majestic

mountains, bustling cities and indigenous people. As a destination or research study site, Vietnam provides incredible beauty, a long and fascinating history and one of the richest biological regions on the planet. Behind these vivid images are highly impacted ecosystems, incomplete knowledge of its biological diversity and increasing threats to its plants and animals. Bringing together the first comprehensive overview of the rich natural history of Vietnam intended for scientists and travellers required the synthesis of widely dispersed sources of knowledge scattered in publications, obscure reports, manuscripts and unpublished information from scientists. This richly descriptive and generously illustrated publication provides a modern overview of the country's biological richness, the historical context of present levels of diversity and the grim reality of the threats to this diversity.

The early chapters provide an overview of Vietnam's natural and cultural diversity and the history of human populations and their relationship with the environment. The authors then explore the origins of Vietnam's diversity within the geological context of the region's dynamic physical environment and provide an overview of the composition of the present-day flora and fauna. The faunal groups present in Vietnam are then described. Three chapters compare and contrast three regions in Vietnam (north: Bac Bo, central: Trung Bo and south: Nam Bo) successfully highlighting the substantial biological and cultural differences between them. Each of these chapters explores the regional topography, climate, ethnic diversity and characteristic habitats, plants and animals, and includes a short listing of recommended areas for the best chance of viewing wildlife. The final chapters provide historical overviews, elucidate modern threats to Vietnam's biodiversity and describe the continuing efforts to mitigate these. Underlying the book is the recognition that Vietnam's biodiversity is incompletely known, and as such, this natural history account is incomplete. Recent discoveries of animals and plants from Vietnam continue to stimulate broad interest in the region's biodiversity. This book is a comprehensive overview of the present state of knowledge of Vietnam's natural history. Hopefully there are plans for revisions as understanding of the biodiversity and region is changing rapidly.

Working from often-fragmentary specimens and cryptic notes, Dr Joyce A. Powzyk beautifully illustrates the book in watercolours of key examples of Vietnam's biodiversity. The well-written and engaging text complements the maps, illustrations and photographs. This book is an effective traveller's guide, an introduction to Vietnam's rich and fragile natural history, providing thoughtful commentary on critical conservation issues and will help raise awareness of the tenuous nature of its biodiversity.

DANIEL HARDER
The Arboretum
University of California, Santa Cruz
1156 High Street
Santa Cruz, California 95060, USA
e-mail: dkharder@ucsc.edu

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Tourism and Climate Change. Risks and Opportunities

BY SUSANNE BECKEN AND JOHN E. HAY

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 paperback, GB£ 24.95, Clevedon, UK: Channel View Publications,
 2007

Most conservationists view tourism with distinctly mixed feelings. It can contribute to rural livelihoods and, through ecotourism,

can generate valuable funds to conservation projects while at the same time educating tourists and local people about the value of wildlife and conservation. Conversely, it is often responsible for driving uncontrolled development, increased pollution, the introduction of invasive species and a whole host of associated social ills.

Tourism's Jekyll and Hyde character is also apparent when viewed through the lens of climate change. Huge numbers of Europeans and North Americans fleeing to sunnier climes are clearly a major contributor to greenhouse gases, yet many of the resorts where they end up are heavily reliant on the income that tourism brings. Ironically, many of the tropical 'paradises' that are most dependent on tourism income (such as the Maldives and the Seychelles) are also predicted to suffer the most significant consequences of anthropogenic climate change, such as sea level rise and an increase in the frequency and intensity of tropical storms.

The first three chapters of this timely and thoughtful book explore these issues in a very concise and accessible manner, giving the reader a clear conceptual framework within which to understand the multifaceted relationship between climate change and tourism. Becken and Hay's identification of 'climate-tourism hotspots' (parts of the world that are economically dependent on tourism and which are forecast to have both high tourist arrivals and significant changes in climate in the near future) is particularly useful and a clear step forward in bring about appropriate global tourism planning and prioritizing it. Considerable depth is added to these conceptual bones through the careful use of case studies from alpine Europe and small island states. The following seven chapters expand upon this conceptual framework, discussing in detail the causes of global climate change, the principles of climate change accounting, mitigation measures, adaptation strategies and finally, climate change practices and policy for tourism.

Although the abundant tables and bullet points make the book sometimes read a little like a consultancy report it should be very well received by policy-makers and tourism professionals who are, perhaps, more used to this style than academics. That said, I fully expect this book to become required reading for tourism and ecotourism courses in universities around the world. As an up-to-date summary of a rapidly expanding area of tourism research it deserves a wide readership and, unusually for an academic book, will be genuinely useful to practitioners and planners.

From the perspective of conservation, Becken and Hays acknowledge that the interaction between tourism, climate change and ecosystems is complex. Climate change will certainly result in rapid and dramatic biogeographical and ecological changes and these will undoubtedly influence the desirability of some tourism destinations. However, the precision of our ecological forecasts are still poor, let alone the potential knock-on effects of ecosystem change on tourism.

Action on all fronts is clearly required, and with over 800 million international tourists travelling every year time is of the essence. Given that it is hugely unlikely that the global flow of tourism will be turned off in the near future, it seems there are few choices but to mitigate, adapt and try to assess the risks ever more accurately.

RICHARD LADLE
Oxford University Centre for the Environment
South Parks Road
Oxford, OX1 3QY, UK
e-mail: richard.ladle@ouce.ox.ac.uk

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Markets and the Environment

BY NATHANIEL O. KEOHANE AND SHEILA M. OLMSTEAD

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paperback, US\$ 19.95, Washington, DC, USA: Island Press, 2007

Markets and the Environment is a highly accessible and concise introduction to the mainstream thinking in economics of the environment and natural resource management. The authors target university under-graduate and post-graduate students in economics or interdisciplinary environmental studies as the primary readership, but as they rightly point out, environmental policy professionals would likewise benefit from the book. *Markets and the Environment* is too short to serve as a stand-alone comprehensive textbook, but this is also its major strength. It summarizes in just over 200 pages the fundamental logic of modern mainstream economics applied to environmental problems without expert jargon or excessive mathematical formalism; this is an achievement.

The authors start by defining what is to become the guiding theme throughout the book, namely economic efficiency, understood as the fundamental criterion for 'society's interest'. A brief introduction to the 'marginalist' thinking is followed by a presentation of the foundations of benefit-cost analysis, and explanation of the arguments for the superiority of market-based instruments as means of achieving efficiency. The authors then explain the concept of 'market failure', evoking three types of highly interdependent explanations: externalities, public goods and the 'tragedy of the commons'. These theoretical concepts are subsequently applied to explain the theory of non-renewable and renewable resource management, and the operation of market-based instruments in practice. The book ends with a brief incursion into the macroeconomics of the environment, optimistically concluding that economic growth and environmental protection can indeed be reconciled, as long as environmental costs are internalized in the price mechanism and economic accounting. Numerous real-life examples are used throughout the book, most of which come from the USA and other Anglo-Saxon countries, ensuring the reader never loses touch with the practical environmental problems at stake.

Markets and the Environment deserves its place among elementary reading for anyone interested in understanding the dominant economic thinking on the environment, yet the book should preferably come with a warning label or at least 'user's guide'. The book's main shortcoming may well reside in its greatest virtue; the apparently compelling and logical manner in which the case for modern mainstream economics is made seems like the only reasonable perspective in any given environmental policy situation. Admittedly, on many occasions the authors remind the reader of the complexities of the 'real world' and call for caution in successfully applying the simplified economic theories, yet the overall thrust remains one of 'economic rationality' against the 'irrationality' of considerations other than economic efficiency.

In particular, two crucial points deserved a place even in this short introductory textbook. They should at least have been dealt with in the excellent chapter-by-chapter 'discussion questions' at the end of the book. First, almost all of the key assumptions of modern mainstream economics are highly contestable. Theoretical and policy conclusions change radically once definitions of, for example, economic efficiency, formation of individual preferences and perfect competition are modified. Notable is the very limited attention given to the