

The book provides the Chinese and Latin names of each vascular plant family, genus and species currently found in the whole Qinghai-Tibet Plateau area, except for the area of Hengduan Mountains. For each vascular plant genus and species, the important morphological characteristics, the related primary literatures, distribution area, range of altitude and environmental characteristics are given in detail.

The book was scrupulously written and there are few errors. Abundant illustrations aid readers' understanding of the text. The book is suitable for professionals

who engage in botany, agriculture, forestry, geography and environmental resources and other related fields, as well as professional teachers and students, staff in production, application, and so on.

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ENVIRONMENT

A Primer of Conservation Biology

By Richard B. Primack. 2008. Fourth edition. Sinauer Associates Inc., Sunderland, Massachusetts, USA. 349 pages. ISBN: 978-0-87893-692-2. Paperback.

This textbook is a useful and up-to-date introduction to the rapidly growing field of conservation biology, written mainly for undergraduate university students. In fact, I have used the previous edition of this book in my own conservation biology course, at York University's Glendon College, for the last four years. Due to its reasonably concise and generally well-researched coverage of many current topics in this field of study, *A Primer of Conservation Biology* is particularly useful for a half-year, or a one-term, introductory course.

Richard Primack, a professor at Boston University and the current editor-in-chief of the reputable scientific journal *Biological Conservation*, has also authored a more detailed, longer textbook titled *Essentials of Conservation Biology*, and this more complex book is suitable for a full-year, more advanced course. In fact, the author has produced new editions of both of these textbooks every few years, since 1993. This poses a bit of a challenge to professors who have been using a particular edition of one of the textbooks for a longer period of time, since, just as one becomes comfortable with a current version of the book, a new, generally longer and reorganized, edition comes along. However, the new editions can be justified by the rapid accumulation of new facts and studies in this dynamic field of biology, and the author has done his best to include numerous very recent and important references in the latest (fourth) edition of the *A Primer of Conservation Biology* textbook. In comparison to the previous edition, the current version of the book contains almost twice as many chapters (there are nine chapters now, as opposed to five chapters in the third edition), but these chapters are generally shorter than the ones found in the third edition. As a result, the new textbook is only a little bit (29 pages) longer than the previous version – a modest and manageable increase in size, from the point of view of a professor planning a short course based on the book. Furthermore, unlike the previous editions, which had only black-and-white diagrams and

figures, the current book has all the illustrations in full colour, and this certainly makes the textbook more appealing to look at and browse through.

The book also has a good index and a useful glossary, including many key terms in ecology and conservation biology. The reference section is detailed and up-to-date, and virtually each reference listed here is followed by the book chapter or chapters where the study was initially cited – a nice and useful touch. A list of selected environmental organizations and sources of information about conservation issues is provided in an appendix.

As always, with such fairly general textbooks, experts can take issue with aspects of the particular coverage of certain controversial topics of current interest. For example, the discussion of introduced species offered on page 111 simply repeats some of the standard points often made by certain invasion biologists. The Purple Loosestrife is cited as an example of an exotic European species which is currently taking over marshes in North America. However, there is no mention of a major study by Hager and McCoy (1998), where the authors reviewed all the available information and found no solid evidence in support of the notion that this much-maligned exotic plant has a negative effect on our wetlands. In fact, it seems that many insect species, including native ones, feed on this plant species (Diehl et al. 1997; Guiasu 2008). Such information would add a bit of much-needed balance to this discussion. Primack also mentions that introduced worm species “are currently altering soil conditions across North America, with potentially enormous, but largely unknown, consequences to the rich native underground biological communities”. Well, since this is a scientific textbook, perhaps we should wait for conclusive scientific evidence before making such sweeping and largely unsubstantiated statements. If the impact of certain introduced species is not currently known, and we do not have any clear evidence that they are causing any harm to the environment, then we should not make assumptions about their potential “enormous” negative impacts. This only

reveals the currently fashionable anti-exotic species bias of certain researchers, rather than any useful scientific facts.

However, despite such occasional problems, this is a useful and reasonably thorough book, which can provide a wealth of well organized information both to biology students and to members of the general public interested in vital current issues in ecology and conservation biology.

Literature Cited

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L., in southern Manitoba. *The Canadian Entomologist* 129: 937-948.

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ZOOLOGY

Threatened Amphibians of the World. Edited by Simon N. Stuart, Michael Hoffmann, Janice S. Chanson, Neil A. Cox, Richard J. Berridge, Pavithra Ramani and Bruce E. Young. 2008. Lynx Edicions, Montseny, 8, 08193 Bellaterra, Barcelona, Spain. 776 pages, 124.00 EUR Cloth.

Handbook of the Birds of the World. Volume 13. Edited by Josep del Hoyo, Andrew Elliott and David A. Christie. 2008. Lynx Edicions, Montseny, 8, 08193 Bellaterra, Barcelona, Spain. 800 pages, 212.00 EUR Cloth.

The Wisdom of Birds – An illustrated history of ornithology. By T. Birkhead. 2008. Greystone Books, #201 - 2323 Quebec Street, Vancouver, British Columbia V5T 4S7. 448 pages, 42.05 CAD Cloth.

* **The Inner Bird Anatomy and Evolution.** By Gary W. Kaiser. 2007. UBC Press, University of British Columbia, 2029 West Mall, Vancouver, British Columbia V6T 1Z2. 464 pages, 85.00 CAD Cloth.

Handbook of the Mammals of the World. Volume 1. Edited by Josep del Hoyo, Andrew Elliott and David A. Christie. 2009. Lynx Edicions, Montseny, 8, 08193 Bellaterra, Barcelona, Spain. 600 pages, 125 EUR Cloth.

BOTANY

Botanical Riches – Stories of Botanical Exploration. By R. Aitken. 2008. Ashgate Publishing, Suite 420, 101 Cherry Street, Burlington, Vermont 05401-4405. 256 pages, 40.00 USD

ENVIRONMENT

Proceedings of the Arctic Biodiversity Workshop. Edited by K. Iken and B. Konar. 2008. Alaska Sea Grant College Program, Box 755040, University of Alaska-Fairbanks 99775 USA. 164 pages, 7 USD

Dynamics of the Bering Sea. Edited by T. Loughlin and K. Ohtani. 2008. Alaska Sea Grant College Program, Box 755040, University of Alaska-Fairbanks 99775 USA. 840 pages, 40 USD.

Resiliency of Gadid Stocks to Fishing and Climate Change. Edited by G. Kruse, K. Drinkwater, J. Ianelli, D. Stram, V. Weststad and D. Woodby. 2008. Alaska Sea Grant College Program, Box 755040, University of Alaska-Fairbanks 99775 USA. 375 pages, 50 USD.

Marine Habitat Mapping Technology for Alaska. By J. Reynolds and H. Greene. Alaska Sea Grant College Program, Box 755040, University of Alaska-Fairbanks 99775 USA. Free – order online at : <http://seagrant.uaf.edu/bookstore/pubs/AK-SG-08-03.html>.