

extinct, and the White-lipped Pecary has not been seen in the recent decades; it was last known to be present in the 1930s and 1940s. The Giant Anteater was also extirpated within decades after settlement, and Tapirs are now considered endangered. As a result of deforestation, range extensions of birds occur, such as the increasing number of Brown-Jays. Also, the book reports on "escaped" plant species from Africa, and on recent immigrants to Monteverde such as Africanized Honey Bees.

As the book discusses in great detail, population fluctuations in the area may be the norm rather than the exception. The effect of El Niño might be reflected by Monteverde's fauna, for example in the crash of Harlequin Frog populations. The "standard of proof" is an issue of debate in population studies. Are there sufficient long-term data for Monteverde to judge how unusual the amphibian declines really are in the context of natural demographic variability? The drastic crashes of Golden Toad, Harlequin Frog and Fleischmann's Glass Frog in 1987 are definitely part of a global pattern. Underlying reasons are discussed in this book.

On top of the existing population crashes, additional features make conservation topics even worse such as uncontrolled market-hunting: a singing male of a Black-faced Solitaire is worth 100 US\$ in San Jose, and it is known that Orchid collection presents an international threat.

One cannot escape the inherent ideology of this book and of Monteverde; e.g., the "no take" attitude and strong conservation beliefs. Monteverde is part of the "Children's International Rainforest" campaign

and strongly underlies the influence of many international conservation organisations. In this context, it is fascinating to learn from this book about the various competing NGOs (non-governmental organizations) and even about the lack of a centralized library, a digital reference pool and other relevant databases for Monteverde.

The editors claim that long-term studies and monitoring are carried out at Monteverde. However, I find when it comes to consistent and high quality long-term data, and to quantitative abundances, this book is less strong. The book does not mention centralized databases available for free over the WWW, such as implemented so successfully in CONABIO, Mexico. As a minor drawback, most of the presented maps are really hard to read, which might be a direct reflection of the lack of spatial ecology approaches in this book. All figures and photos are in black-and-white (which I find suits the style of the book perfectly).

In summary, despite deficiencies, this is an outstanding and highly recommended book; a great and long-term achievement of the many people involved with Monteverde. Indeed it belongs on the book shelf side-by-side with major publications about tropical ecology such as La Selva/Costa Rica, Barro Colorado Island/Panama and Coch Cashu/Peru.

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## Plundering Paradise

By Michael D'Orso. 2002. Harper Collins Press, U.S. \$24.95. xix + 345 pp., illus.

This is a book about the Galapagos; not the usual wildlife account, but the human side of island life. My initial reaction to the opening pages of this book was negative. The author's attitude seemed to be cynical and he appeared to have missed the key concept of the Galapagos Islands. Rapidly though, I realized that this man was one of the best writers I had come across in a fair while, even if he is unnecessarily a little crude on occasion. I sensed he despised the Pollyanna attitude of ecotourists while describing the contribution they made. However, I really questioned if he could see the marvel that is Isla Galapagos.

Unlike most authors (who write about the amazing Galapagos wildlife) this one writes of the lives of the people who live and work on the Galapagos Islands. He includes unfaithful spouses, corrupt officials, the power and money hungry, the uncaring, as well as people trying to do the best to preserve the natural heritage.

While he focuses on the islanders, it is impossible for him to neglect the political and administrative influence of mainland Ecuadorians. The key concern is that the mainlanders will favour exploitation of nature over protection. Not surprisingly, there is more focus on the evils that beset the Galapagos than on the positive progress. But that is human nature and we all love a scandal.

I did wonder why he travelled to these remote islands to get material for a book. Each country has bad politicians, corrupt officials, vested interests, questionable use of tax money, and cheating spouses. In particular, in D'Orso's country (the United States) there is a real concern that under the current administration, environmental issues are being overridden by industrial interests. However the author reveals that the problems are far more acute in Ecuador than in North America. I have seen recent estimates that at least \$2 billion is plundered from Government funds each year by Ecuadorian political leaders. One recent President, Abdala Bucaram, is said to have spent his time in karaoke bars

and fled the country with millions of stolen dollars. Many of Ecuador's 12 million people, of whom 70% are considered poor, blame the state of their economy on this pillage.

So what kind of people does D'Orso find in these remote islands? First there are the "native" inhabitants – where native means those who were born on the islands. This could mean people with a wide variety of ancestral origins. The first true settlers were Norwegian, but most today are from Guayaquil and Quito. Often these people are the uneducated poor and it is difficult for them to benefit from the ecotourist trade (they do not speak English, etc.)

Then there are the "adventurers", people who came looking for something inexplicable and found it in these islands. They are shopkeepers, hoteliers, missionaries, and other western occupations. Photographs of many of these people precede each chapter. To these are added policemen, park employees, and, of course, politicians.

Another group is the research people, mainly associated with the Darwin Research Centre. These are outsiders who come for limited periods, although some do stay for many years. The other outsiders are the tourists. Mostly they are ecotourists who come to marvel at unspoiled nature. If D'Orso is to be believed, some women travellers expect more from their male guides and some of these young men are happy to oblige! One important characteristic of both these groups is that they do not rely on the Galapagos to earn their living.

Finally there are the plunderers. These are mostly commercial fishermen, poor people from the mainland in ships supplied by the rich and influential, who reap illegal harvests of sea-cucumbers (a big seller in Asia as an aphrodisiac), sharks – or at least their fins, and other sea creatures. Joining them are people who slip in to protected areas to hunt or fish for fun.

By going through the lives and stories of these individuals we begin to understand the real history of the human Galapagos. It is not as pretty as the non-human story, but it is most interesting in a gossipy way. The

author shows a supercilious attitude towards the islands' charms and the visitors they attract. Yet I often feel "The author (lady) doth protest too much" (apologies to W. Shakespeare) on these issues. Between lines, you can sense that D'Orso is in awe of the natural wonders and realizes the enormous importance of the ecotourists. His descriptions of the birds, reptiles, and scenery are very accurate and poetic. He clearly respects those people who crusade against the islands' many wildlife problems.

Visitors, both past and future, will get a lot out of this book. Not that all of us are insensitive to Ecuador's woes, but the author delves more deeply at a personal level than we would ourselves. Not only will the reader get a sense of daily life, but will learn more about the conservationist's struggle. The group that is trying to rid each island of goats, pigs, and rats is a very tough and formidable team. The hunters have a strenuous, arduous and uncomfortable job. They must also fight for money (it costs millions for weapons, helicopters, and supplies) and stave off the well-meaning but impractical animal rights supporters. Some of this material is very intriguing.

Recently Lucio Gutiérrez won the presidential election after promising to fight corruption. He gained much support with promises to help poor indigenous people. If he is to succeed he will need to keep his support from the social movements, the Indians, and get support from the business sector and the international financial community. He has to do this when his supporters do not have real power, which still lies with a privileged minority of people of Spanish origin. This will be a formidable task, but if he is successful it will bring improvements to the lives of those on these enchanted isles that D'Orso chronicles in this book. So there is hope, we hope.

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## Birds of the Untamed West: The History of Birdlife in Nebraska, 1750 to 1875

By James E. Ducey. 2000 [but released for review in 2002]. Making History, Omaha, Nebraska. 300 pp., illus. U.S. \$25.00.

This book is a valiant attempt to report the ornithological history of Nebraska to 1875. commendable strengths include Chapter 1, which discusses the bird knowledge and lore of the native Americans, the Lakota, Missouri, Otoe, Omaha, Pawnee, Ponca, and Winnebago tribes. Native language bird names are provided when available. Chapter 2 provides a summary of historic explorations, most of which were made

by men merely passing through the state while heading farther north and west. Many of these explorers came through in autumn, after the bird breeding season was over. Exceptions were Lewis and Clark, in Nebraska from 11 July to 8 September 1804, and Thomas Say with the Major Long expedition, present from 19 September 1819 to 6 June 1820. Chapter 3 provides a succinct account of the early bird habitats, and Chapter 4 tells which species were found in each of these habitats. Ducey provides, in square brackets, occasional corrections of obviously misleading statements in Aughey's 1877 paper. The list of references