

to letting childhood imagination run wild in an abandoned lot that “could hide things for a thousand years. There beneath the roots of soggy flowers were the bones of murdered pirates and dinosaurs, the eye of a unicorn turned to coal.”

It is impossible to do justice to thirty-five stories in one review. So I'll tell you that they're all interesting and personal – some serious or funny, some joyful or sad, some a combination – and that in all their far-flung diversity, each illustrates that all-important intimacy. It's something Lisa Couturier expresses with particular feeling in her “Reversing the Tides” piece about the magic of natural enclaves near resilient urban waterways that “In all their woundedness ... manage to give life.”

Here's what she says about her chick monitoring work at a heronry on a delta near New York City: “When our work is finished, we emerge from the heronry carrying an assortment of dog ticks on our bodies and splattered with what we call splooj (our word for the large and liquid bowel movements of baby birds), bird pee, and regurgitant ... But I also

carry a gift: an intimacy with the spirits, sounds, and touches of birds. The snowy egret nestlings, so fearful even as I try to calm them, wrap their long reptilian-skinned toes around my fingers in an effort, I guess, to feel safe. The excruciatingly shy glossy ibises lay limp in my lap while I stroked their dark brown feathers. And although the black-crowned night herons assertively nip at me, I admire their aggressiveness; it helps them survive. The colours, habits, feathers, pecks, personalities, smells, movements, eyes, and cries of these birds are inside of me. I, quite simply, love them.”

It is a love and an intimacy naturalists can easily identify with. And *City Wilds* is a story collection book-loving naturalists would appreciate. I myself read the book too quickly the first time around. I would like to go back and re-read many of the stories, one at a time, with space in between to savour each one ... intimately.

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Conservation Biology

By Andrew S. Pullin. 2002. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom; New York, USA. 345 pages. Cloth U.S. \$120; paper U.S. \$45.

The discipline of conservation biology has taken a prominent position among the sciences. As demand for highly trained practitioners of conservation biology increases, so does the number of general text books available for use by educators. ‘*Conservation Biology*’ by Andrew Pullin is a newcomer to the list of possible texts vying for position as ‘the’ penultimate learning resource. This specific book was intended to serve as an undergraduate text or supplementary reader and assumes a background in basic ecology. Pullin incorporated three significant changes that alter the cosmetics and content substantially over other undergraduate level texts. First, his book focuses more on the United Kingdom and Europe than on North America as seen in other leading texts. Second, unlike the other competing texts in the field of conservation biology, he has excluded material that does not fall within the realms of natural science such as policy, economics, and other human dimensions. Third, he has included information that has not been well covered in other treatments such as the conservation of “processes”. Each of these changes is worth further discussion as these are really what differentiate this text from the others.

The decision to expand the geographical focus of the text beyond primarily North American focus is admirable. This expansion in focus would have been particularly evident had Pullin incorporated more human dimension sections that discuss policy and legislation that is typically based exclusively on issues from the United States (e.g., US Endangered Species Act). In

the end, the text is clearly regional, emphasizing the United Kingdom and the rest of Europe. As such, this text would be particularly relevant to undergraduate courses in those locales. Pullin does provide some excellent examples from the rest of the world, but I believe that room still exists for a “non-regional” and balanced treatment that is globally applicable. Unfortunately, this text does not fill that void.

Pullin has omitted much of the material on human dimensions due to what is described as a traditional poor treatment in other conservation biology texts. I agree that few if any of the existing conservation biology texts are sufficient on their own at presenting social science and economic issues, but they do serve as starting points. By excluding human dimensions from the table of contents, it only helps to polarize the natural sciences from the social sciences. Indeed, one of the themes that makes conservation biology unique is its interdisciplinary nature and this point should be emphasized, particularly in an undergraduate text.

The text is also arranged in a manner that differs from convention. Foremost, I want to state my excitement about the chapters on landscape ecology (12) and the conservation of evolutionary processes (13). These chapters are rather unique to conservation biology texts and are well deserving of inclusion. These chapters are well written, interesting, and worthy of dissemination to students. However, there are several earlier chapters for which the same can not be said. The first section on biodiversity and global ecosystems (Chapters 1 and 2) is extremely simplistic and is not appropriate for this text. The author prefaces

this section by suggesting that many students may wish to skip this section. I agree and wonder why this section was not strengthened to make it compatible with an undergraduate level course. The theme of oversimplification is evident in other parts of the text as well. The chapter on biotic effects (4) is very broad, but lacks depth on important concepts, particularly those dealing with conservation genetics.

In conclusion, this book does have several qualities that separate this contribution from the existing suite of texts and make it a worthy addition to the series of complementary materials used in developing an undergraduate course. However, the book lacks sufficient background in ecology and evolutionary concepts to serve as a stand alone text. In all fairness, the author acknowledges that the book is best supplemented with material and to that end the author provides numerous information sources (including web sites and literature). Furthermore, I found the order of materials and general organization clumsy. The simplistic nature of many of the chapters will limit the use of the text in graduate

training. The writing is clear throughout, but the depth of treatment varies among and within chapters. The book is well illustrated using colour plates and has ample examples from the primary literature that encompass a variety of taxa. The publisher's arrangement of material on the page does result in significant "white space" that could have been used for fleshing out topics that were inadequately covered. This book adds to the suite of texts available to educators. However, I feel that this text is in similar company with Hunter (2001), and not nearly as in-depth or complete as Meffe and Carroll (1997) or Primack (2002). Beyond academic circles, I doubt this book will have much appeal to groups such as naturalists. As this book is written as a course text, the nonacademic reader will find the writing style and content unfulfilling.

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Ecological Basis for Stand Management: A Summary and Synthesis of Ecological Responses to Wildfire and Harvesting in Boreal Forests

Edited by S. J. Song. 2002. Alberta Research Council Inc., Vegreville, Alberta, Canada. 329 pages.

It appears that this book is supposed to be an attempt to reverse the notion of that "Albertans who have seen logging practices tend to have a more negative view of the forest industry". This publication is a true mirror of the current state of art of natural resources. Mis-managed fisheries resources lead the way, very closely followed by forestry and other resources. "Harvest rates have risen 4 fold over the last 32 years in Alberta ...", and despite all the glossy statements about sustainability, it's not a secret for any informed conservationist that the global timber demand cannot be sustained any further, and certainly not in Western Canada (as constantly reduced harvest rotation periods show, for instance).

This book is nicely structured into 13 Chapters and has 27 Tables, 30 Figures and 5 Appendices. Each chapter offers a descriptive Text, Highlighted Text Sections, Emphasized Key Findings, Summary Table, Condensed Management Implementations, Future Research Needs and References. Although the book chapters are supposed to provide guidance for forest managers and practitioners, I would say due to the lengthy text (329 pages) managers will not read it, nor would I really recommend them doing so. If this book is supposed to be used as a sole resource to manage Forest Stands in Alberta, I would be really worried. For instance, the biodiversity issue, or rare vascular plants, are not addressed at all; instead White-tailed Deer issues are well covered. Already the book title leaves it undefined "which" boreal forest is meant: the

one in Scandinavia, Russia, Alaska or Canada? I am sure this book is not a global guide how to manage boreal forests world-wide since no Russian references are quoted (but Minnesota's Forest is cited several times). Unfortunately, this is not simply a book by 13 Forest Consultants funded by the Albertan Forest Industry and Government Complex; university-based researchers are involved. Thus, this book seems to represent the current (conservation) state of knowledge on boreal forestry for a large part of North America (a huge and globally important forested land mass). Considering its global importance, the weak guidance provided and the lack of hard facts presented in this book appears pitiful, if not scary.

The overall scheme pursued in this provincial publication is already ambiguous enough: does fire equal harvesting? The answer for this question is, in most chapters: yes, almost. Other paradigms which the authors try to hammer home to the readers are that Residual Tree Retention would usually be good, forest harvest could mimic fires, convergence after 60 years to natural forests would occur, and forest edges older than 25 years hold no edge effect anymore. The authors seem to think that the boreal forest is a relatively simple ecosystem with few players, and thus this book deals mostly just with Aspen and Spruce.

For my taste, this is a big book reporting on imprecise and lacking information. A bigger book does not make automatically for a better book. The reader will not learn about the reasoning why a Riparian buffer zone of 200 m is used in Alberta. The concept of presenting statistical confidence intervals, rather than averages and qualitative information, appears to be foreign