Publications

Priorities for the Conservation of Mammalian Diversity: Has the Panda had its Day? edited by Entwistle, A. & Dunstone, N. (2000), 472 pp., 46 line diagrams, 10 halftones, 37 tables, ISBN 0521 77536 1, UK. (paperback), 0521 77279 6 (hardback); £24.95 (paperback), £70.00 (hardback), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

The recent release of the *2000 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* (Hilton-Taylor, 2000) focuses our worst fears: an alarmingly high number of species are at risk of disappearing forever. Among mammals, 24 per cent are classified as Threatened and the number of species identified as Critically Endangered – those closest to extinction – has increased dramatically since the previous assessment in 1996. These statistics demand careful planning of future directions for conservation action. What do we know and what do we need to know? How should our work proceed? And, most importantly – given the restrictions of limited resources and personnel, how should we establish priorities for conservation? *Priorities for the Conservation of Mammalian Diversity* addresses these questions in regard to the conservation of mammalian diversity, in addition to examining the role of mammalian conservation in the big picture of preservation of the earth's biodiversity.

Part 1 poses two questions. First, what is so special about mammals that leads them to be targeted for conservation rather than (or at the expense of) other taxonomic groups? Second, within the mammals, what is the role of the so-called 'flagship', 'keystone', 'umbrella', and 'indicator' species? (terms well-defined and analyzed in the chapter by Leader-Williams & Dublin). It becomes apparent that not all mammals are created equal. Mammalian conservation work has favoured large charismatic species ('flagships'), rather than those most in need of attention (see also Amori & Gippoliti, 2000). Further, the management approach has concentrated on single-species rather than addressing the preservation of biodiversity at the ecosystem level. Part 2 plays off and extends the material introduced in Part 1 by addressing methods that can be established to set priorities for mammalian conservation. Authors in both parts have done a thorough job of highlighting the interplay between the various scientific, sociological, political, and practical factors that influence these contentious issues.

The heart of the book, Part 3, showcases examples of effective conservation programmes utilizing mammals. Readers are presented with a variety of activities highlighting the need for effective public relations and legislation to catalyse a conservation agenda, the importance of protected areas and recommendations for increasing their effectiveness, the impact of conservation outside protected areas and flexible management initiatives that must be undertaken to integrate local communities into these activities, the role of ecotourism, and the priorities that must be established to conduct effective and meaningful *ex situ* conservation. Unfortunately, the geographical coverage is biased, focusing primarily on mammal conservation in the UK and Africa. And in spite of the frequent plea to work closely with native communities, none of the non-UK chapters is authored by a local person working at the local level (the closest being the Beijing-based team writing on pandas). The volume would have been enriched with the inclusion of accounts from some of the innovative projects involving mammal conservation which have been achieved by local communities.

The final three chapters in Part 3 present over-arching summaries of mammalian conservation and reflect on the options and priorities for future action. Especially provocative is the treatment by McNeely on how to address the root causes of our biodiversity crisis and how to construct an effective overall strategy for mobilizing political and economic support for conserving mammals. The final chapter by Entwistle and Dunstone provides a comprehensive capstone to the volume. Their effort here, as well as in their overall organization and presentation of the book, bears witness to the importance of considering the conservation of mammals and the manner in which we frame our approach. And the message delivered should resonate for all readers, from students and the informed public to those on the frontlines of conservation.

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References

Amori, G. & Gippoliti, S. (2000) What do mammalogists want to save? Ten years of mammalian conservation biology. *Biodiversity and Conservation*, **9**, 785–793.

Hilton-Taylor, C., compiler. (2000) *2000 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*. IUCN Publications, Gland.