

SAVING NATURE'S LEGACY: PROTECTING AND RESTORING BIODIVERSITY

Reed F. Noss and Allen Y. Cooperrider

A REVIEW BY R. GERALD WRIGHT

In their epilogue the authors lament the life of the "conference biologist," whose job it is to go to conferences, give lectures, and write obscure papers. These biologists have now written a book designed to share the science of conservation biology and the ideas it offers to protect biodiversity with others—particularly those *others* in the real world—as opposed to having the subject remain the domain of lecture halls and journals. It would be nice if this lofty goal could be achieved, but I doubt that it can be.

This book, however, will—or should—find a place on the desks and shelves of all professional biologists and resource managers. Noss and Cooperrider have written an excellent book whose greatest strength is its readable synthesis of the important aspects of the broad discipline of conservation biology. Also, judging by the number of times I have already seen the book cited in draft manuscripts, it appears to be one of the more influential books to come out among the proliferation of recent biodiversity writings. The book reads well. Although the principles that it discusses have broad geographic application, all of the case examples and most of the discussion of agency management practices are oriented to the United States, a factor that may enhance its appeal to NPS managers.

The origin of the book was the inability of the Keystone National Policy Dialogue on Biological Diversity to produce specific recommendations. The first two chapters introduce the concept of biological diversity and why it should be of concern. This is followed by a presentation of the basic concepts of biological conservation, threats to biological diversity,

and the current status of diversity in North America. The meat of the book begins with chapter three, which is a critique of past and present resource management failures and a look to future strategies. Subsequent chapters, e.g., "Managing Forests," "Managing Rangelands," and "Managing Aquatic Ecosystems," include comparisons of traditional resource management practices in the given subject area with those advocated following the principles of conservation biology. These and other chapters make several recommendations for altering current thinking and integrating biodiversity conservation into resource management; they also often contain excellent case examples of how these recommendations can be applied.

I feel one of the strongest chapters is "Designing Reserve Networks." Although most of this material is not new, rather presenting material published elsewhere primarily by the senior author, its thorough compilation and synthesis in one place makes it a valuable reference. The chapter on "Managing Rangelands" is, likewise, very good. It presents, often in a new light, considerable information on the impacts of livestock grazing and livestock management prac-

tices on biodiversity. These insights are often highly provocative, and I trust would raise the hackles of at least some traditional range managers. Conversely, I thought the chapter on "Managing Forests" was one of the weakest.

Although it critiqued some of the concepts of new forestry, the presentation discussion was less compelling than that of other chapters.

As one would expect of these authors, the book pulls no punches in its examination of the causes underlying the crisis in protecting biodiversity. The ignorance of the general public, the often irrelevant nature of university training, and the foibles of agency land management practices all receive equal and usually valid criticism. The book is an important reference for all individuals involved in the management of parks and protected areas and I highly recommend they read it.

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