BOOK REVIEW FOR BIOLOGICAL CONSERVATION

Malcolm L. Hunter and James Gibbs;
Fundamentals of Conservation Biology. (3rd Edition). Blackwell, 2006. ISBN 978-1-4051-3545-0 (paperback). 497 pages. Price £34.99.

The third edition of this established text on conservation biology introduces some welcome revisions, albeit of a largely cosmetic nature. Despite the introduction of James Gibbs as a co-author, relatively little of the excellent content has changed, which will please much of its established readership. Moreover, the book's logical organisation of into four parts is retained. The first of these deals with the importance of biodiversity and, after introducing conservation biology as a discipline, examines the different levels of diversity from ecosystems through to genetic diversity. The second part focuses on threats to biodiversity and covers not only habitat loss, pollution, overexploitation and invasive species but also includes a valuable chapter on extinction processes and population viability analysis. In essence these first two parts serve as an overview of the main concepts and theory associated with conservation biology. The third part then builds on this through its coverage of the maintenance of biodiversity at the ecosystem level and at the species level through the use of both *in situ* and *ex situ* techniques. The fourth and final part, in focusing on human factors, provides an overview of the key social and political issues associated with the use of biodiversity by people, which complements the earlier scientific material effectively. The numerous case studies, which are scattered throughout, are particularly useful in illustrating key points and have been slightly expanded in the new edition.

The main strength of this text continues to be its breadth of coverage, logical structure and accessible style. However, where this new edition does show a definite improvement on previous versions is in the adoption of more sensible formatting and layout and, most notably, the introduction of colour figures to replace the previous pen and ink drawings. This makes the book brighter and more user-friendly than its slightly austere predecessor. If I have one criticism of the text it is its publication in hardback-only format, which could make the £35 cost prohibitive to some students.

In summary, the comprehensive nature and logical organisation of this text, combined with the substantial improvements to layout and presentation in this new edition, continues to make it an ideal text for undergraduate students of conservation biology at all levels. I will continue to make use of it for my own teaching and can strongly recommend it for use on other undergraduate courses.

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