

# ☞ The Heart of the Matter

*New essential reading on parks, protected areas, and cultural sites*

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*The World's Protected Areas: Status, Values, and Prospects in the 21st Century.* Edited by Stuart Chape, Mark Spalding, and Martin Jenkins. University of California Press. \$54.95. xv + 359 pp.; ill.; index. ISBN: 978-0-520-24660-7. 2008.

*Reviewed by David M. Graber*

JUST AS THE PACE OF DESTRUCTION OF THE NATURAL WORLD HAS ACCELERATED, so has the global pace of formally identifying and protecting the last bits. Thanks to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and its World Conservation Monitoring Centre, and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), there is substantial information about efforts by the nations of the world to establish and manage protected areas, and how well they are doing. This remarkable book is a handsome, daunting compendium of that information designed for nature conservationists possessing a strong interest in the mechanics of parks, nature preserves, and other protected areas.

Loaded with beautiful photographs, color graphics, tables, and figures and printed on heavy coated stock, this book could at first glance be mistaken for a coffee table book intended for browsing. This it most decidedly is not. *The World's Protected Areas* is instead is a deadly serious professional manual, dense with data and written in a style that is dispassionate and clinical, yet never permitting the reader to slip past the real consequences of its findings.

It begins with a history of the concepts and development of protected areas from the earliest known sacred sites 12,000 years ago; a nature reserve established by the King of Sriwijaya on Sumatra in 684 CE—a site that now comprises the core of a modern World Heritage site. Then follows William the Conqueror declaring a royal hunting preserve in England, through the American national park idea that began not with Yellowstone, but when Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove were deeded by Congress and President Lincoln to California in 1864 as a forest reserve. Early in the 20th century, countries in Africa, South America, and Europe established national parks originally modeled after the Yellowstone example. As the century advanced, new complex and varied forms were taken by contemporary protected areas throughout the world.

From the establishment of hunting and fishing preserves has evolved the concept of protected areas for preserving biodiversity, and the increasing use of science to effectively manage these sites for their biodiversity. The authors then follow by enumerating of the extent of protection afforded to habitats and biodiversity, from the Antarctic to the equatorial tropics

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to marine systems, and offering admirably even—if too often discouraging—coverage of the entire planet. This book uses the IUCN protected area classification system (categories I–VI) when describing the nominal geographic extent of protection.

Following this is a chapter on the threats to protected areas, from human incursions to climate change. Relief from what might otherwise be a painful recitation of data is provided by the regular insertion of illustrated case examples, such as how the Dong Hua Sao Protected Area in Laos has been progressively compromised by forest cutting and the planting of cash crops, and the impacts of goats, pigs, dogs, cats, and rats on native biota in Galápagos National Park, Ecuador. In many of the poorer countries where enforcement of protective statutes is weak or corrupted, extraction of fuelwood, timber, wildlife, and minerals is a constant threat. Even tourism, upon which many parks and protected areas depend for income, often is itself a threat to protection through construction of infrastructure, vandalism of protected cultural elements, trampling, vehicle emissions, corruption of local managers, and even demands for fresh food and water that may be extracted from the protected area itself.

The book provides an excellent section on the wider context of protected areas—how these relate to national and local governance, indigenous people, and differing cultural views of nature protection. One potent element is the designation of protection to an area that is populated, particularly if populated with indigenous people; this, however, is more the rule than the exception in contemporary designations. The book discusses private protected areas, particularly those managed by nongovernmental organizations such as The Nature Conservancy, and briefly discusses the (largely American) notion of “easements,” to prevent future conversion to non-conservation purposes. Also discussed are biological or conservation “corridors” of compatible land use that can link protected areas and thus facilitate migration, preservation of genetic diversity, and even support critical minimum populations of large animals when the individual preserves are not large enough or contain complete ecological amenities to do so. Another highly contentious question faced by both governments and protected area managers is “Who governs?” To what extent should people living nearby or inside protected areas have a say in their policies and management? Related to this is the issue of how income from tourism—not only entrance fees but commercial income as well—is distributed.

Another chapter presents a rather technical and sometimes weedy discussion of the management of protected areas: resource protection, tourism, finance, infrastructure, and basic operations. The authors get seriously into the planning process, complete with a flow chart. Other topics include data management, the pricing of facilities and services, what administration should look like, evaluating management effectiveness, and even sustainability. There are boxes cover the role of rangers, and developing capacity and training in the less-developed countries. Fortunately, this discussion is not too theoretical, and grounded in the existential realities of actual protected areas around the globe.

An all-too-brief discussion of marine protected areas is followed by a rather longer section on the prospects for protected areas in the 21st century. The authors make the case that population growth, development, and the loss of natural biodiversity will increase the demand for, but also the vulnerability of, protected areas. The outcomes of the Fifth World Parks Congress in Durban, South Africa, in 2003, and the 2010 targets in the Convention on

Biological Diversity are utilized to frame the issues. The authors maintain an almost-hopeful demeanor as they present a rather grim picture in many places.

The full second half of this book is devoted to region-by-region analysis of protected areas throughout the world. Although still data dense, it takes the concepts presented in the earlier sections and applies them to a large number of examples. As with the rest of this book, the regional chapters are handsomely illustrated with photos, maps, and data figures and tables.

In any case, it's an intriguing trip around the world from the perspective of protected areas. For those with a professional stake in nature preservation, and to a somewhat lesser degree those who manage cultural protected areas, *The World's Protected Areas* is an invaluable reference and a most impressive assemblage of information.

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*Ed. note:* In this issue we debut “The Heart of the Matter,” a feature that highlights books we think will be of lasting value to park professionals. Each installment focuses on a recently published book that, in some way, gets to the core of our work on behalf of parks, protected areas, and cultural sites.

We are cognizant that such judgments carry an element of risk, for one can truly assess a book's staying power only in retrospect. And on the day we write this, the word has come down that amazon.com is now selling more e-books than hardcovers—a bit of desultory news that undercuts our old-school associations of “timeless books” with beautifully bound objects that are a joy to hold in one's hands.

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