

The Heart of the Matter

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

Protected Area Governance and Management, edited by Graeme L. Worboys, Michael Lockwood, Ashish Kothari, Sue Feary, and Ian Pulsford. Canberra: Australian National University Press, 2015.

Reviewed by David Harmon

The purpose of “The Heart of the Matter” is to call the attention of *George Wright Forum* readers to books that we think are important additions to the professional literature. You’ll have noticed that the tagline of the feature goes further than that, and we are aware that a certain level of presumption goes along with giving yourself permission to declare something “essential.” In the case of *Protected Area Governance and Management*, the presumption is, I think, completely justified. A truly comprehensive guide to the full range of issues, both conceptual and practical, that protected areas managers in today’s world are facing, this is a book that really ought to be on the desk of every senior-level park manager (and of anyone who aspires to be).

Why? Because it gives one an unmatched look at all the major issues facing protected natural areas around the world, and as we move forward into a new era of changed climate and tightly interconnected economics and politics, no manager can afford to ignore the global context of his or her work. A product of the International Union for Conservation of Nature’s World Commission on Protected Areas, *Protected Area Governance and Management* builds on previous substantive work. Several of the co-editors have been involved in precursor editions dating back to the pioneering 2001 volume *Protected Area Management: Principles and Practice*, the first attempt to place the subject on a global footing. A second edition followed in 2005, and then in 2006 came a successor book, *Managing Protected Areas: A Global Guide*, which introduced a broader cast of expert chapter authors, expanding the perspectives being presented. That was a significant advance, but even so most of the authors still came from a relatively small number of English-speaking countries. The authors responsible for the 29 chapters of *Protected Area Governance and Management* represent a far wider reach, and this is reflected in the diversity of examples and perspectives, which come from all parts of the world.

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The book opens with useful overviews of basic protected area concepts (including the IUCN definition, and its system of protected area categories), natural and cultural heritage as they relate to protected areas, social and economic influences, and values and benefits. Nuts-and-bolts chapters cover planning, interacting with the media, overseeing cultural uses and features, and managing visitor use, operations, incidents, and resource threats. Context-setting chapters cover topics such as governance types, benefitting from complexity thinking, and geoconservation. Sectorial chapters treat freshwater/estuarine and marine protected areas, and strategic chapters tackle climate change, biodiversity and ecosystem function, leadership development, public engagement, connectivity conservation, and evaluating management effectiveness. And there's more.

The editors do a good job of harmonizing the various authorial voices while still preserving the unique flavor of the different contributions. As one might guess, it's not really a book meant to be read straight through; at 35 pages shy of a thousand, it would take an exceptionally doughty reader to manage it. My suggestion is to skim it from front to back, noting areas of special interest to you. Then read the introductory chapters in full to get aligned to the rest of the book, and afterwards dip in and out as your inclinations dictate, knowing that you can return to other sections later as references. This reading plan is aided by the book's design. Generously illustrated with full-color photographs, maps, tables, and graphics, it is accessible to professionals and upper-level students alike. Each chapter has its own reference list (yay! it's so much easier that way than having to flip to the back all the time), and, crucially for a book like this, there is an excellent index.

When taking a global perspective, inevitably the subjects have to be dealt with at a level less specific than that taken in specialist texts. The challenge—probably the biggest one editors of a single-volume overview like this have to meet—is to find the sweet spot between superficiality and suffocating detail. Nearly all the chapters of *Protected Area Governance and Management* hit that target. If you want to understand what is going on in the wide world of protected areas, this is simply a book not to be missed.

It can be ordered in hard copy from the publisher, but is also available at no charge as a PDF or fixed-layout e-publication; go to <http://press.anu.edu.au/titles/protected-area-governance-and-management-2/> for all three options.