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David W. Macdonald, Ruth E. Feber (Eds) Wildlife Conservation on Farmland, 2015, Oxford University Press, ISBN: 978-0-19-874550-1, 2 volume set, 672 pp., £85.00 (hardback)

This two-volume book is a huge collection of review and research papers written by 54 researchers that worked at or with Oxford University's Wildlife Conservation Unit (and its antecedent the Oxford Foxlot), one of the foremost assemblages of conservation researchers in the world,.

With increasing human population and widespread urbanization, farmlands become, in many rural landscapes, important reservoirs of biodiversity. Of course, there are various types of farmlands, and this book deals with the agricultural practices, society, fauna and flora of the United Kingdom, but key insights can be extended to other geographical areas with similar agricultural development. Thus, the book is of general interest beyond the British context.

The first volume deals with the natural history of farmlands and it is organized into 16 chapters, plus a preface, written by 36 authors. The first chapter is an excellent introduction to the problems and opportunities that agricultural development presents for the conservation of biological diversity. Chapters 2 and 3 focus on field margins and should be therefore of high interest for any people interested in edge effects and ecotone ecology, with emphasis on plant and invertebrate species. The effects of field margins, hedgerow trees and woodland management on the conservation of moths are discussed in Chapters 8 and 12, whereas the effects of local and landscape management for

dragonflies are analysed in Chapter 10. A more general view of the impacts of land use and management on freshwater biodiversity is provided in Chapter 11. Chapter 4 can be seen as an introduction to the population and behavioural ecology of small mammals inhabiting low farmland, whereas particular effects on small mammals associated with woodlands are discussed in Chapter 12 and the habitat use of the vesper bat in Chapter 9. Chapter 5 is devoted to the bird conservation in an era dominated by the agricultural transformation of the natural landscape, whereas behavioural issues hindering success in reintroductions of the grey partridge are addressed in Chapter 13. Issues involved in the restoration of the water vole in the Upper Thames are presented in Chapters 14 and 15. Chapter 6 examines the possible influences of organic farming on biodiversity (with special reference to butterflies and spiders) and Chapter 7 compares the environmental impacts of organic and conventional farming. The book ends with Chapter 16, which is a general essay on rewilding in Britain.

The second book includes a preface and 15 chapters written by 26 authors and dedicated to the conflicts between people and wildlife in the countryside. The first chapter presents an overview of the many tensions between farming and wildlife; the other chapters deal with specific conflicts. Chapters 2 and 3 discuss fox biology, control and hunting (with their economic implications). Chapters 4 and 5 are dedicated to badger ecology and conservation. The impacts of two invasive species, the American mink (with a focus on the effects of its presence on native mustelids) and the crayfish are discussed in Chapters 6-7 and 8, respectively. Chapter 9 illustrates the impact of increased releases of non-native, captive-reared gamebirds on small native seed-eating species (negative) and large ones (positive). Buzzard conservation is addressed in Chapter 10. The complex ecology of brown rats (truly naturalized or co-habitants?) in connection with their control is discussed in Chapter 11, whereas mole control is the focus of Chapter 12. Chapters 13-15 turn to more general issues. Chapter 13 is a review of the use of learned food aversion to reduce wildlife feeding on inanimate food of either commercial importance (such as agricultural products) or of conservation concerns (e.g., eggs of ground-nesting birds).

Chapter 14 uses examples of landscape-scale projects to show how it is possible to achieve stakeholder partnerships and effectively deliver habitat restoration and management. Finally, the role of citizen science is critically discussed in Chapter 15. The various chapters of both volumes are highly interconnected through continuous cross-references, thus offering an integrated view of the issues dealt with in this book. However, each chapter can be also read separately and has its own bibliography (which inevitably implies some degree of redundancy). Each volume is indexed separately.

The book does not contain colour figures, which is a pity, especially for certain graphs or maps which are very difficult to read in grey scale. Consistency in graphs (e.g. thickness of lines, fonts, symbols, patterns, etc.) is lacking and is distracting. Given the great variety of issues, the length of each chapter, and the variability in the organisation of each chapter, the book would have benefited from a summary at the end of each chapter, similarly organized.

Of course, these are minor annoyances and the book is a superb collection of intriguing essays, reviews and research papers, which make this work a must to read for all those (scientists, conservation practitioners, policy makers and stakeholders) interested in wildlife conservation on farmland.

Too often conflicts between people and wildlife are described from the standpoint of other species being a problem for humans, despite it being the other way around — humans are problems for other species. The most important point of merit of this book is to show how we can reduce these conflicts through concrete actions in a human-dominated ecosystem which plays essential services and which is home to an impressive biodiversity.

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