

PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT: PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

By Graeme Worboys, Michael Lockwood and Terry De Lacy. Oxford University Press (253 Normanby Street, South Melbourne, Australia) 2001 xix+399 pp (tables, figures, appendix, bibliography, index) AU\$75.00 Pbk. ISBN 0 19 551300 2.

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Protected Area Management is a valuable textbook, but it needs a subtitle to show that its focus is almost entirely on Australia, primarily New South Wales. As Australian tourism agencies, Chambers of Commerce, and other boosters clamber aboard the park tourism bandwagon, considerable debate could be saved if they were to read this excellent book first.

The book is divided into two parts and supplemented by an appendix with maps and statistics on Australia's protected areas. Part A contains four chapters that review Australia's natural environments and social frameworks, the purpose of protected areas, and basic management systems. Part B contains 13 chapters covering planning and administration, economics, conservation of natural and cultural heritage, threats to protected areas, incident management, tourists, local communities, indigenous people, other landholders, and the future. The bibliography has good coverage up to 1999, but many of the references are incomplete. There are numerous text boxes providing snapshots, case studies, and "backgrounders". The

snapshots illustrate single issues at specific sites, the case studies cover multiple issues at specific sites, and the backgrounders cover broad issues not specific to protected areas. A companion website at the University of Queensland is also provided, with additional but less relevant materials.

The book emphasizes the management of natural environments for conservation more than recreation, and while this is entirely appropriate for protected areas, it is perhaps surprising given the tourism interests of the authors. If a second edition is prepared, it will be interesting to see if the authors include chapters on tourism industry structure, user group conflicts, land use impact assessments, gateway communities and amenity migration, and techniques to encourage conservation in properties adjoining parks. This edition does not.

The authors argue that, “once unsustainable tourism practices are in place, conservation staff who try to change them will face powerful political forces” (p. 272). Thus, park managers are often on the defensive against tourism boosters such as government agencies and regional economic lobbyists who promote parks as regional “honeypots” (p. 275). They also note, “clearly, many protected areas will be totally unsuitable for such use” and “at all times, key destinations need to be designed so that the integrity of the site is kept intact” (p. 275).

Given the significance of management in protected areas, this part of the book seems weak. The section on tourism impacts in parks, for example, consists of a single 10-line paragraph, three text boxes, and

three illustrations. It cross-references chapters 9, 10, and 11 on natural and cultural heritage; but these say little more. For instance, Table 9.2 on fauna management is taken from a *Readers' Digest* calendar, and contains only phrases such as “visitor use management to minimize potential negative interactions with wildlife” (p. 191). Other illustrations of impacts show rock art filled with sand, a tent pitched in a closed area, and a hiker sunk to the waist in boggy track. Ironically, if this reviewer’s memory is correct, this latter photograph was taken by a colleague to show that hikers should stay on tracks no matter how muddy.

Of the three text boxes, one reports observations such as an estimate that 25% of walkers on one Tasmanian track suffered gastrointestinal diseases from polluted water, and that parks staff took out over 15 tonnes of rubbish from one section of track. Unfortunately, these observations are from 1985–1986; more up-to-date figures would be useful. Another text box is a highly condensed table from a 1989 review of impacts in Australian parks. The considerable volume of more recent research is not cited. This is a significant weakness.

The section on ecologically sustainable use is somewhat stronger. The material includes codes of practice in Australian alpine parks, summaries of recreational opportunity spectra and limits of acceptable change, and a quotation from a senior park manager who truthfully says that “there is no quick and easy answer to determine how many people an area can sustain, or what impacts are being caused by visitors” (p. 294). The chapter concludes that arrival numbers are increasing, visitors are welcome but conservation comes first,

effective management needs accurate measurements of impacts, planning limits are an essential tool, and every ecosystem is different.

The book is solidly written, terse and information-rich, with nearly 400 pages of fine print. It reads smoothly, with Worboys' voice dominant except in the economics chapter, presumably by Mike Lockwood. There are a few quirks, such as the analogy between parks and mammalian muscles (p. 54) or the misleadingly naïve suggestion that environmental impact is simply a product of number of people, per capita resource consumption, and technology (p. 237). But there are also some very useful materials, such as a table of Australian tourism cost studies up to 1995 (p. 164), and another summarizing economic impacts of this business in Australian World Heritage sites (p. 171).

Though the authors have spent much of their careers in this field and clearly treat it seriously, they have not lost their sense of humor. Chapter 6 begins with a quote from Baldrick of the *Blackadder* series: "Sir, I have a cunning plan" (p. 114). One can only hope that park management plans prove more fruitful than most of those dreamt up by Baldrick - especially because, as noted by a protagonist in the series, Baldrick "wouldn't recognize a subtle plan if it painted itself purple and danced naked on a harpsichord."

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