

the future of a particular region on the one hand (in this case, the UK), and the globe on the other. Much of the material is specific to the UK, but readers from 'overseas' will find much that sounds familiar, and that may help them in their own struggle for sustainable development. The book demonstrates, once more, that a coherent universal view has emerged in recent years of what sustainability implies, and how it can and must be achieved in the next few decades.

The book is well organized and well written. The authors present essential facts, argue convincingly, and provide, especially in the 'long-term programme for a sustainable world' in the last chapter, very concrete conclusions of what has to be done. The book will be a valuable reference for all who want to do their part in tackling society's most urgent problem, that of attaining sustainability while that is still possible.

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Stinging Trees and Wait-a-whiles. Confessions of a Rainforest Biologist

BY WILLIAM LAURANCE

x + 193 pp., 53 figs., 23.5 × 15.7 × 1.5 cm, ISBN 0 226 46896 8
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This book is more a personal journal and adventure story than a scientific treatise. It is a book you will pick up one evening, get absorbed by, and finish in one or two sittings. In a warm, open, narrative style, Laurance describes the mixed frustrations and celebrations of a year spent in tropical Australia conducting his graduate research on how fragmentation of tropical rain forest affects the diversity of forest-dwelling mammals. He warns in the preface that his book 'is not a typical account about scientific research – at least I hope not, for my colleagues' sake.' Readers whose past includes field expeditions of any length will feel a touch of familiarity with many of the situations Laurance describes, however, and a likely response is 'Oh, yeah, I've got a story like that.' When inexperienced, but adventurous students ask about what it is like to be a field biologist, dreaming of travelling to far away places, working with exotic animals, meeting interesting people, and doing something meaningful to protect biodiversity, I think I will refer them to this book for a reality check.

The account may not be typical, but the types of problems Laurance had to face are not all rare, either. Included are lessons that field work often consists of mundane repetitive hard work conducted under rough conditions, illustrated by photos of mud-covered field crews. Laurance describes the travails of operating on a tight budget, organizing enthusiastic, but occasionally unruly crews of untrained volunteers, and maintaining quality control and scientific rigour without becoming authoritative or oppressive. Bits of interesting natural history are scattered among the chapters, although these often seem to be about blood-sucking parasites, poisonous snakes, misanthropic vegetation, and other colourful nemeses of the field biologist. I could have skipped descriptions of leeches in private places.

Importantly, Laurance accurately conveys the message that the graduate experience of many field biologists is not an easy apprenticeship or tutelage. Rather, you might be cast upon unfamiliar shores, connected to your major professor by a monthly phone call. You will need to learn on your feet, be adaptive, respond to crises (always new) as they arise, all while the clock and the money are running down. Sometimes a story emphasizes the value of perseverance or fortitude, as when facing severe weather or a vehicle breaking down in the middle of nowhere. But parts of the book also raise more philosophical issues that a prospective field biologist should consider. How much should you mix advocacy for a cause you strongly believe in with scientific detachment? How would you react if confronted with intransigence, hostility, or racism? These are lessons not typically learned in classes or seminars. Laurance may not come through every predicament with elegance and grace, but shows that intelligence, a big heart, and a stubborn streak can take you far.

I would have liked more discussion of the creative scientific process. Some chapters include anecdotes that describe interesting side projects or 'mysteries', or summarize the main findings of the study. A map of the study sites and controls is provided, but the research is generally described in broad strokes. It would have been informative, particularly for graduate students, to delve deeper into how the project was developed, how the study sites were chosen, the logic of the design, the need for replication, and the overall genesis of the project.

One of the most interesting aspects of the book is that it chronicles the early environmental movement in tropical Queensland, particularly the controversy associated with nomination of parts of the region for World Heritage status. Not only are national politics reviewed, first-hand accounts of local reactions are described as well. Laurance shows how research can motivate conservation, and how a scientist can act both as a generator of data and an advocate for change. Equally important are the lessons that enlightenment from an enthusiastic stranger is not always welcome, consideration and honesty should be standard protocol, and the most dangerous and unpredictable animal in the woods walks upright.

I think this book will provide an excellent introduction to the daily grind and sociology of conservation research for a prospective field biologist. It is also an engaging story about politics, science, and personal growth, related with spunk and humour. As conservation research continues to place field biologists in the middle of potential conflicts between opposing environmental perspectives with increasing frequency, the scenes in this book will become less atypical and more exemplary. The amazing thing is, after all Laurance struggled through, he finished his dissertation and went back for more.

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World Water Vision. Making Water Everybody's Business

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