

**Review: *Wetlands In Danger: A World Conservation Atlas***

Edited by Patrick Dugan

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Dugan, Patrick , editor. *Wetlands In Danger: A World Conservation Atlas*.  
New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. 192 pp. US \$35.00 cloth  
ISBN:0-19-520942-7.

For sheer excellence of presentation, *Wetlands In Danger* exceeds the value of its sale price. The work is well-organized and illustrated with high-quality photography. Anyone interested in wetland issues will find useful information here. In addition to physical geography, the authors discuss wetland biology and ecology, anthropogenic pressures on wetlands, and the political, economic, and cultural geography of wetlands.

The first four chapters are an introduction to the atlas itself. The first chapter defines wetlands and gives an overview of each type. The authors use the wetland definition agreed to at the 1971 Ramsar convention sponsored by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN). Many readers will be unfamiliar with the inclusion of lakes as wetlands, but the Ramsar definition includes water up to 6 meters deep.

The second chapter introduces wetland ecology, a science still viewed as fundamentally biological. This chapter effectively shows that landscape-scale hydrologic and geochemical processes are essential elements of the role of wetlands in both local and regional ecology. However, the biological ecology of wetlands remains the most obvious and most easily explained to a diverse audience. Thus, the third chapter discusses the unique life in wetlands and the unique role wetlands play in the life cycle of animals not confined to a wetland habitat.

The fourth chapter discusses the historical causes and extent of wetland loss worldwide, including the once prevailing notion that wetland use for agriculture was a positive expression of human control over nature. Here, the theme of the book is clarified. Wetland loss is occurring in devastating proportions, and we are only beginning to understand the

long term consequences of the short term benefit.

The remaining portion of the book, the atlas, divides the world longitudinally into three regions: (1) the western hemisphere; (2) Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, and; (3) Asia, the Pacific, and Australia/New Zealand. Each region is further divided into subregions. A chapter is devoted to each subregion and presents the extent and diversity of wetland occurrence, type, and function for each. Also discussed are activities endangering wetlands, as well as regional conservation efforts. The themes of the first four chapters are elucidated in greater detail here at the subregion scale.

One strength of *Wetlands In Danger* is its scope. Readers with different objectives will all find something of use here: from global biotic diversity in wetlands to how native populations utilize wetlands to insight into regional activities.

On the whole, *Wetlands In Danger: A World Conservation Atlas* is well conceived and well-executed. It provides broad perspective of wetland issues on both a continent and subcontinent scale. However, because many wetland conservation issues are negotiated locally, the large scale perspective is sometimes less important. The book would be more effective if it fully addressed the local component of wetland conservation.

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