

Tasmania's Threatened Fauna Handbook: What, Where and How to Protect Tasmania's Threatened Animals

Sally Byrant and Jean Jackson, 1999.

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426 pp. 4 Chapters.

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AUSTRALIA already has a long list of native species that have become extinct since the arrival of humans in this country. Even longer, however, is the list of flora and fauna currently under threat from human activity. Ongoing clearing, degradation and replacement of native vegetation combined with the invasion of exotic species, not only threatens the survival of endemic flora, but the animals clinging to existence in these vanishing habitats.

Due largely to isolation from the mainland, much of the fauna of Tasmania has often followed a slightly different evolutionary path and is hence unique to the island state. Isolation along with the existence of relatively large areas of undisturbed land and the absence of some of the more destructive introduced species including foxes, has also allowed some animal species, extinct on the mainland, to survive in Tasmania. Despite all this, Tasmania too has a long list of threatened species.

Tasmania's Threatened Fauna Handbook not only presents an exhaustive list of Tasmania's threatened animals, but provides details of each species' physical and behavioural characteristics, their habitat preferences, and where feasible, the exact location in which they are known to occur. It is this attention to detail that makes this book a valuable addition to the library of anyone associated with or interested in the conservation of Tasmania's wildlife.

When picking up this book for the first time, the reader may be daunted by its sheer size and may question its intended use as a handbook, defined in *The Australian Oxford Dictionary* as "... a short manual or guidebook". The introduction, however, quickly dispels any doubts by explaining what is included in the three sections of the book and how to use them. It also describes the different conservation categories and the legislative basis of fauna conservation in Australia. A list of useful contacts is presented for those readers who wish to know more.

The aim of Section 1, Location of Tasmania's Threatened Animals, is self-explanatory. A two-page map of Tasmania is overlain with named 1:2 5000 maps. Each map is then listed alphabetically with information on which species are known to occur there, the map grid and locality of the sighting and land tenure. Species that may occur in that area are also listed along with descriptions of habitats to survey. Although detailed and very extensive (this

section accounts for over half of the entire book), the text is easy to understand and would be especially useful for landowners and managers wishing to know which species may occur on their land.

Section 2 presents comprehensive information on each of the 162 threatened species (up to five pages per animal) including some, such as the *Thylacine*, which are already extinct. Details covered in this section include physical descriptions and the distribution, habitat and biology of the animal. There are also listings of key sites in which the species may occur, key threats facing their survival and information relating to habitat management and other ways to help conserve the animal. A map showing the distribution is included along with a list of known localities and potential habitat.

It came as a surprise to me that the species discussed in this section of *Tasmania's Threatened Fauna Handbook* are not necessarily those that would appeal to the "fluffy bunny set". To the contrary, the threatened fauna of the island includes only 20 mammals (nine of which are seals and five are whales) and 59 birds. The remaining 83 species are reptiles, amphibians, fish and a diverse range of invertebrates.

The final section of the book provides an overview of some broad habitat types including alpine vegetation, rainforest and grasslands, indicating the threatened animals found in each and listing other species of interest. The aim of this section is to facilitate the recognition of habitat potential in areas that have not been well surveyed or covered by the mapsheets in Section 1. The authors indicate that this information may assist in the restoration and rehabilitation of native habitats to encourage the movement of threatened animals into an area.

An appendix provides scientific and common names as well as the species conservation status in Tasmania and the Commonwealth. The final six pages of the book have been set aside for the reader to record notes. My only real criticism of this text is that it is ring-bound in a soft cover and would therefore be unlikely to survive the physical rigours experienced by any well read book. A more durable cover would increase costs, but would also improve the longevity and functionality of this book.

Although much of the information in *Tasmania's Threatened Fauna Handbook* is presented as lists, the text used in the animal profiles and habitat overviews is written in plain English, while still providing detailed descriptions. So simple is the language, that the absence of a glossary does not detract from the book's impact.

This book was never intended to be the definitive scientific text on animal biology, behaviour and

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conservation. However, the wealth and depth of information it presents on Tasmania's threatened animals elevates it well above the status of most handbooks. The target audience of "...anyone associated with the land, coast, fresh waterways and oceans of Tasmania, whether they be owners, managers,

commercial or recreational users," and "...anyone interested in learning more..." are well served by *Tasmania's Threatened Fauna Handbook*. If similar volumes were to be produced by other states, Australia's rapidly growing list of extinct native species may be slowed.

Parks for Biodiversity: Policy Guidance based on Experience in ACP Countries

IUCN — The World Conservation Union, 1999.
IUCN Publications, Gland, Switzerland and
Cambridge, UK.
118 pp. ISBN 2-8317-0464-2.
RRP USD\$24.75.

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The IUCN (World Conservation Union) defines biological diversity (or biodiversity for short) as "the variability of life in all its forms, levels and combinations". One approach to maintaining biodiversity is through the reservation of protected areas. In less developed countries, there is a poor capacity to fund and manage protected areas efficiently, and therefore international co-operation is required. The ACP countries — Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, are rich in biodiversity yet lack the economic means to conserve. The IUCN released *Parks for Biodiversity: Policy Guidance based on Experience in ACP Countries* after a request from the European Commission to provide policy guidance for support to protected areas in the ACP countries. This report is a summary of the main points derived by the IUCN, and was written to inform the wider public.

Although the focus of this publication is on biodiversity, its content places emphasis on protected areas and how they can be used to conserve biological diversity. The IUCN defines a protected area as "An area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means". This report highlights the need for an improved approach to managing protected areas in the ACP and suggests strategies that can be adopted by all stakeholders. An emphasis is placed upon the role of external support, and the steps potential "donors" can take in providing financial aid.

The goals of the IUCN and the European Commission are provided in the Foreword and Executive Summary, as well as a brief overview of definitions and key points. Part I provides a background to protected area planning and management and a 10-step summary of how donors can best support protected areas. The remainder of the report is divided into three parts, each designated to either Africa, the Caribbean or the Pacific. For each country, a perspective is provided detailing the extent and diversity of protected areas, and the nature of their management. The text continues by suggesting possible approaches for combining conservation and

development in the protected areas of the ACP in order for self-sustainability. Major issues are identified for each country, most focusing on the decline in government funding for conservation, the role of indigenous communities, and the need for multiple uses in protected areas. Each part concludes with a step-by-step guide to what external help is needed, such as funding, involving the local community, private sector and non-governmental organizations, and improving professionalism and training. The text concludes with an extensive reference list specific for each of the ACP countries, in order for potential donors or just the interested reader to gain more information.

The clear structure of this report provides a logical and informative read. A highlight of the body of the text is the emphasis of key statements in bold print. This segregation of key sentences is so well organized that the reader can gain much of the information through selective reading. The text makes frequent use of figures to complement the material presented. Maps and graphs are clear and descriptive and add value to the content. The use of full colour photographs, along with the glossy finish increases the appeal of the text. Boxes of text are regularly used to present additional information.

As well as providing an overview of protected areas management in the ACP, the IUCN uses practical suggestions of how biological conservation in these countries can be improved. *Parks for Biodiversity* not only explains the difficult financial situation that the ACP countries have in environmental management, it takes that extra step by giving specific guidelines for how external support can assist effectively. Its approach for protected areas management in the ACP moves away from traditional, western-style strategies. The IUCN acknowledges that alternative approaches need to be applied to environmental management in less developed nations, with each requiring its own approach specific to the country's unique biota.

A positive tone is presented throughout the text, presumably to encourage potential donors to provide support to the ACP nations. Despite the focus on ACP countries, *Parks for Biodiversity* proves relevant for all regions of the globe. The conservation of biodiversity using protected areas is internationally congruent and is based on the same set of ecological principles. I commend the IUCN for producing an invaluable contribution to biodiversity conservation in the less developed world.

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