**Nature’s Place:**

**Human Population and the Future of Biological Diversity**

A free publication.

ADAM GARTNER¹

There are few people who would argue that the growth of the human population is not exceeding a sustainable level. Every year, thousands of species are lost and the world’s natural reserves are slimmed to near exhaustion to fuel continuous economic growth. Nature’s Place, a soft cover resource style booklet, has succeeded in applying geographic information systems (GIS) to the analysis of human population and species diversity, as well as providing an up-to-date account of the human population problem and how it relates to biodiversity and habitat loss.

The text is comprised of seven main chapters plus a summary, centerpiece map, two appendices and a brief glossary. Among the topics addressed are: Human Activity and Biodiversity; Population and Biodiversity; Population Pressures in the Most Biodiverse Places (Hotspots); and, Population and Hope. Boxes are used to effectively supplement and expand on examples used in the text and graphs and tables are used to demonstrate trends relating to population growth. In some instances, the impact of these statistics on some readers may be lost in the complexity of their delivery. However, anything lost in the translation of statistics are compensated for by the text which delivers the author’s message clearly and concisely. I also found the use of pictures and plates provided time for the mind to relax, thus allowing the message to sink in, although some readers may find this style of page layout a little busy.

Nature’s Place has a large potential audience, from high school students, politicians and the lay public to scientists or university lecturers. For students, topics and themes are covered in enough detail to make this book useful for environmental, demographic, and social studies. For academics and scientists, Nature’s place is a very useful resource book.

¹School of Natural Sciences, Edith Cowan University, Joondalup, Western Australia, Australia 6027.

**Landscape: Fire The Force Of Life**

2000.
Department of Conservation and Land Management, Como, Western Australia.
47 pp. RRP $6.50.

KELLI O’NEILL¹

The use of fire in Western Australia to manage forest ecosystems is contentious. There is huge disagreement between scientists, the environmental movement and members of the general public over the effects of prescribed burning. Some believe that the Australian flora and fauna has adapted to fire over time and needs it for their continued survival. Others perceive prescribed burning as damaging to biota. A final group of people thinks we should be applying the precautionary principle to prescribed burning. This disagreement is present due to the slim knowledge we have on fire and its management. No one really knows, how, when or if we should use prescribed burning.

Prescribed burning is practiced in Western Australian forests. An overview of how the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM), the principal fire managers of Western Australia, use prescribed burning as a forest management tool is presented in this special edition of Landscape Magazine. It is a collection of their latest research on fire history and fire effects in Western Australia. Landscape is published by the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) and written for general readership.

Most people agree that prescribed burning is necessary for the protection of human life and property. However, there is fear within the community that the practice has adverse effects on biodiversity. Burrows, addresses this concern and promotes a fire regime that will simultaneously safeguard human life and protect biodiversity. New methods of identifying past fire regimes and using this research to develop fire management plans are described. Other aspects of fire ecology and management, such as the problem of smoke pollution and the logistics of fighting wildfires are also discussed.

The issue of prescribed burning in Western Australian forests is complex. Although this issue may only present the views of scientists and fire managers in CALM, it does highlight the need for intensive long-term research before everyone can agree on a fire management plan for Western Australia. The authors of Fire: the Force of Life have taken what little knowledge is available and written a simple, beautifully presented introduction to fire ecology in Western Australia. I congratulate them for the massive task it must have been.

¹School of Natural Sciences, Edith Cowan University, Joondalup, Western Australia, Australia 6027.