

More than a tourism primer

Newsome, D., Moore, S. A. and Dowling, R. K. 2002
Natural area tourism: ecology, impacts and
management.

Channel View Publications, Clevedon UK.
Pp. 340, ISBN 1-853150-25-3 (hbk), 1-853150-
24-5 (pbk)

Price: £UK 49.95 (hbk), 19.95 (pbk).

MICHAEL CALVER¹

FEW would doubt the increasing appeal of natural area tourism and its contribution to the economies of many communities. There is also a popular perception that it is environmentally benign in comparison to resource exploitation industries and therefore deserves a significant place in ecologically sustainable development. However, several authors including Honey (1999) and Butynski and Kalina (1998) show that perception is not always reality and that natural area tourism may have significant environmental impacts that question its long-term sustainability. Overall, tourism's potential for deleterious impacts, its importance in some regional economies and the complexities in designing and managing tourism experiences make it an important and growing area of study. It is therefore timely and valuable that Newsome and his colleagues provided an integrated approach to the natural area tourism topic that covers all these broad components. The book will be valuable as a text for undergraduates in a range of disciplines including environmental and life sciences, tourism and the social sciences, giving students a critical insight into the interdisciplinary nature of the subject. It should also become a well-thumbed reference on many professionals' shelves because of the value of its interdisciplinary overview to specialists seeking insights from beyond their disciplinary expertise.

With regard to its potential as a textbook, a significant and obvious strength of this work is its integration of the many facets of natural area tourism in one volume. There are eight chapters which, excluding the introduction and conclusion, cover the important areas of the ecological perspective, environmental impacts, visitor planning, management strategies and actions, interpretation and monitoring. Although there are excellent books dealing with subsets of these topics, I am unaware of any that integrate all within a unified perspective. This is critical for impressing upon students the interdisciplinary nature of the topic. Furthermore, the excellent organization of the book with informative sub-headings, boxed case studies and detailed contents pages facilitates pin-pointing topics of interest both for students and for instructors compiling reading lists.

Many ideas for exploiting this broad coverage in teaching occurred to me as I read the book. For example, students with a strong biological background would approach the book with a sound understanding of basic ecology. Rather than skip the chapter on the ecological perspective, they could be asked to critique it, looking closely at the content, the structure and the examples to decide if it presents a sound, basic coverage within the space constraints. A similar approach could

be used profitably with students from different backgrounds who had a sound knowledge of other areas such as visitor planning. The many case studies used to illustrate key points could also become topics for research essays. The well chosen, up to date references provided are a useful introduction to the research literature for undergraduates. Many instructors will appreciate the annotated "Further reading".

Structurally, the binding of my copy is strong, suggesting that the book will wear well travelling in student backpacks or being banged onto photocopiers in libraries. However, one point that some users will find annoying is the collection of all references at the end of the book rather than at the end of individual chapters. Thus photocopying a single chapter of interest will lose the critical reference details. Furthermore, some of the print in figures is a little small for my ageing eyes and may not project well for those instructors who copy figures for overhead projection in lectures (e.g., Figure 3.1, p. 81 and Figure 3.13, p. 110).

However, it would be very wrong to represent this book solely as a potential undergraduate text. From my background in animal ecology, I found the chapters on visitor planning, management strategies and actions and interpretation clear, thorough introductions to topics of which I had only a shallow knowledge. Thus I will refer to this book repeatedly for these important new perspectives. Hopefully, they will also improve my dialogues with colleagues in management and environmental education. The chapters closer to my expertise are also comprehensive and I was impressed with the clarity and logic of the presentation. Obviously, there are hard decisions to be taken about what to exclude, but there were two topics I would have liked to see developed. Firstly, in the discussion of the ecological perspective, the concept of ecosystem health (Rapport 1998) could have been introduced as a recent, interdisciplinary approach to quantifying the responses of ecosystems to anthropogenic disturbances. Secondly, the chapters on monitoring and impacts would profit from a consideration of the precautionary principle and its role in impact assessment and monitoring (Dewille and Harding 1998).

Overall, the scope of *Natural area tourism* makes it both a stimulating undergraduate text and a valuable reference for specialists seeking an interdisciplinary perspective on this important topic. It introduces both structure and scholarship to a diverse area and is likely to be the leader in its field for several years.

References

- Butynski, T. M. and Kalina, J., 1998. Gorilla tourism: a critical look. Pp. 294-313 in *Conservation of Biological Resources* ed by E. J. Milner-Gulland and R. Mace. Blackwell Science, Oxford.
- Dewille, A. and Harding, R., 1997. Applying the precautionary principle. The Federation Press, Sydney.
- Honey, M., 1999. Ecotourism and sustainable development: who owns paradise? Island Press, Washington DC.
- Rapport, D., 1998. Defining ecosystem health. Pp. 18-33 in *Ecosystem Health* ed by D. Rapport, R. Costanza, P. R. Epstein, C. Gaudet and R. Levins. Blackwell Science Incorporated, Malden Massachusetts.

¹ School of Biological Sciences and Biotechnology, Murdoch University, Murdoch, Western Australia, Australia 6150.