

Preface to the Second Edition

Conservation is at the core of environmental science and action. It is increasingly influencing the policy of governments and the behaviour of individual people. Maintenance of the diversity of species and habitats and the sustainable use of resources are essential to protect the options, welfare and prosperity of future generations. Many would argue that it is also a strong moral imperative that humanity does not needlessly destroy other inhabitants of this planet.

This book aims to give an overview of conservation and to demonstrate the many interdependent specialisms it requires. We emphasise generalities, which are illustrated by examples from around the world. The book is intended as an aid for coursework, fieldwork and management – and to generate debate. A huge amount is being written about conservation, and this book should help to guide readers towards the most influential specialist sources.

Environmental sciences are advancing rapidly, against a cultural and policy background that is changing even faster. This second edition contains substantive updating in all chapters, and colour plates. There have been advances in knowledge about wildlife, including its richness and distribution, while the discussion of ecosystem services, sustainability, resilience and mitigation has risen in prominence, helping to emphasise human links to nature. Sections on marine biology, sustainability, the landscape matrix, restoration and monitoring are heavily revised, as is the chapter on policy, environmental economics and behaviour. We now include referencing to sources, particularly where topics are controversial or the material might be hard to find – and we urge readers to review the supporting evidence for themselves. We have included detailed research on European semi-natural habitats as this has increasing relevance to cultural landscapes and sustainability worldwide. Technical terms are kept to a minimum. A definition is given at the first use of many terms and phrases, so the index can be used as a glossary. We conclude each chapter with a short list of the key messages it contains. There is slight overlap between some sections, to make each more self-explanatory. In the final chapter we give a brief case study of conservation in action – protecting elephants in a complex socio-economic system in the Mali desert – which illustrates how the subjects of all the previous chapters can integrate in a single project.

We hope that we have made the book useful to all those interested in environment and sustainability, from beginners to professionals. It is based on our teaching to students and professionals of many backgrounds, and on our other professional work in conservation practice and policy. Since the first edition (in 2004) there have been major practical successes, and conservation has moved forwards – but not fast enough, and most threats have risen. Our measure of the success of this book will be how much it helps those of us who care about our own and other species to become more effective conservationists.

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