

Preface

11:15 P.M. 20 June 1990 I'm not used to being this hot so late at night. I don't know the sounds coming through the window . . . crickets? . . . frogs? . . . a wheezing air-conditioning system? I don't know what to do.

I'm in a dorm at the University of Florida; the fourth meeting of the Society for Conservation Biology has just ended; I'm sifting through various conversations of the last 4 days. I wonder if I should postpone my plans to write a sequel to my book on managing forests for biodiversity – a sequel that would focus specifically on tropical forests. At the meeting I've discovered that professors are using my book for a much broader range of conservation courses than I ever anticipated and that tells me that there is a niche to be filled.

Apparently various multiauthored books on conservation biology topics are not filling the need for a basic text. Perhaps I should add a brick to the foundation of the discipline before pursuing a more specific project. Now if I can rough out an outline before I get too sleepy.

27 August 1993 Over three years later and I have just finished the first draft. Actually the writing went reasonably quickly (I did not begin in earnest until May of 1992) because I chose a sort of stream-of-consciousness approach in which I wrote only what I knew or thought I knew. Now I look forward to spending the next several months combing the literature, correcting, refining, and updating this draft. It might seem that this approach would make it easier to convey my original thinking about conservation biology as opposed to reporting on everyone else's thinking. Perhaps so, but I claim no truly original thoughts. I tend to think each person is no more than a unique melting pot for a vast community of ideas.

Unfortunately, I have already nearly reached my target for final length and thus keeping the book to a reasonable size and cost will be a challenge. Perhaps the best index of this is the fact that in *Wildlife, Forests, and Forestry*, I described managing forest ecosystems for biodiversity in 370 pages; in this draft the subject is covered in four pages. It has been particularly difficult trying to balance spanning the breadth of conservation biology with plumbing its depths. I have tended to err on the side of breadth on the assumption that most readers will use the book as part of a conservation biology class, and the instructor can easily focus on depth, for example, by describing applications of the principles outlined here.

24 August 1994 Sifting through the literature of conservation biology has been great fun, although it has entailed some difficult choices. If many of my readers will be North American, should I keep things familiar and easy by illustrating general principles with redwoods, bald eagles, and well-known foreign species like tigers? Or should I try to open some vistas by describing fynbos, huias, and thylacines? Many years of working abroad predispose me toward the latter approach, but I have curbed this temptation to some degree, partly to save the space it would take to describe the fynbos, and partly because I have tried to select literature that will be reasonably accessible.

As I enter the final stages of production I often think about my readers and how they will use this book. My primary audience is students who have some background in biology and ecology but who have not taken a previous conservation biology course. I also hope to reach some general-interest readers and have tried to keep the prose fairly lively so that they can manage at least half an hour of bedtime reading before dozing off.

This is an opportune place to explain two features of the book. First you will note that there are no scientific names in the text; they are all in a separate list of scientific names, which also constitutes an index to all the species mentioned in the text. Furthermore, the 'literature cited' section constitutes an index to authors, because after each citation the pages where it is cited are listed.

27 December 1994 Two more days before the book goes out to copy-editing, and it is time to start listing all the scores of people who have helped, in an acknowledgment section. I particularly want to thank Andrea Sulzer, the friend and artist who illustrated the book; the Department of Wildlife Ecology of the University of Maine, where a relationship that began in 1970 has recently led to a professorial chair endowed by the Libra Foundation; and Aram Calhoun who has shared all but a month of our marriage with this book. Finally a special thanks to everyone who buys this book for all its royalties are allocated to a fund to support conservation students from developing countries.

When I began writing this book my goal was to fill a gaping hole, but now my colleagues have produced two other credible conservation biology textbooks (Primack 1993, Meffe and Carroll 1994), and more are in the pipeline. Still, I have absolutely no regrets about having embarked on this project for I have thoroughly enjoyed it, and if a small portion of my enthusiasm reaches my readers, it will be well worth the effort.

Second edition: January 26, 2001 Before undertaking this second edition I was rather dreading the prospect of replotting old ground, tearing apart my first edition and putting it back together again. In hindsight, the last nine months of sorting through the conservation biology literature have been rather enjoyable, especially after I realized that it was okay to be selective in my reading. With 651 new references there is a lot of fresh material to chew on here; most of it is very recent (my last trip to the library was this morning) although I have also added some older papers from the "classical period" of conservation biology (the 1980s). Some scepticism about the "authority" of information found on the world wide web has severely limited my use of these sources, but on the other hand I have provided many URLs to give readers a gateway to the organizations that make conservation biology happen. A new glossary and many new illustrations are also prominent features of this edition.

Third edition: 15 May 2006 I am returning home from a four-month sabbatical in Australia, where weekends were spiced with pursuing wombats, whale sharks, and lyre birds, just in time to work on the production phase of this book. Two years ago when I decided to invite a coauthor to join me it took about ten seconds to identify James Gibbs and, the next day, it took even less time for him to accept. I have worked with James for 25 years, since he was a new student at the University of Maine and I was a new professor, and it has always been a pleasure. James' expertise with genetics and population biology, complementary experiences with field conservation projects

around the world, and his willingness to dive into the social sciences was just what was needed to strengthen this edition.

Another salient feature of this edition is a strong shift from Andrea Sulzer's pen-and-ink drawings to color photographs. Finding photos for this edition has been an enjoyable challenge and we are grateful to the many photographer/artists whose works appear here. They are named in the legends but special recognition must go to Marc Adamus whose photos grace the cover, three section frontispieces, and two other figures. We have also expanded our visual breadth to include many other artists—ranging from the anonymous cave painters of Lascaux to Monet and Rubens and particularly, Debbie Maizels and the staff of Emantras.

Of course the substance of revising any textbook lies in new literature and the field of conservation biology remains vigorous in this regard. The 762 new references added are just a small sample of the high-quality research that characterizes the discipline. We have also added three new case studies, holding back somewhat because we think case studies should largely be generated and presented by faculty and students based on their own experiences and interests. Overall the book is about 6% longer than previous editions as measured by the number of words, but 50 pages shorter because of more compact formatting.

As with earlier editions, the royalties are going into a fund to support conservation students from developing countries, most recently the fieldwork of a student from Argentina studying cavity-nesting birds in the Andes for her dissertation. In time the royalties will be sufficient for an endowed, perennial source of support for similar aspiring conservationists.

M. L. Hunter, Jr.