

# Publications

**Community Forest Monitoring for the Carbon Market: Opportunities Under REDD**, edited by Margaret Skutsch (2011), xix + 188 pp., Earthscan, London, UK. ISBN 9781849711364 (hbk), GBP 60.00.

The last few years have seen an escalation of interest in the concept of reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD), and potential co-benefits such as forest enhancement and biodiversity conservation (REDD+). Human use of forests is believed to contribute c. 12% of total anthropogenic carbon emissions (van der Werf et al., 2009, *Nature Geoscience*, 2, 737–738), and REDD+ is expected to play a major role in any post-2012 agreement of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It is generally anticipated that an international REDD+ framework will see carbon accounting and payments taking place at the national level but around the world very large areas of forest are managed by local people under some form of community forest management. There remain many unanswered questions about how these people might contribute to REDD+ and how it might affect them. This important book, edited by Margaret Skutsch and with chapters from a range of expert authors, contributes to this debate by examining the potential role of local communities in the monitoring of forest carbon.

The book is an edited volume in two parts. The first covers Principles and Issues, and the second a set of case studies. All the material in the book is drawn from a major empirical study called the Kyoto: Think Global, Act Local (K:TGAL) programme, funded by The Netherlands Development Corporation. This 6-year programme conducted research at 30 study sites and nine control sites in seven countries. In each case local communities were trained with a standard methodology to monitor changes in carbon stocks in their forests. The sites selected were mostly in dry forests of a relatively low value from a timber perspective, where opportunity costs (for example from agriculture) were low and degradation a greater problem than deforestation.

The chapters in the first section of the book carefully explain the potential of community forest monitoring, the carbon emissions it can save, the value of local participation in monitoring, the broader policy context for REDD+, information required for national REDD+ programmes, and the costs and reliability of community carbon monitoring. It concludes with more technical chapters on the field methods used and the

potential of free software for use in the field. These chapters provide a very clear and compelling case for community monitoring of forest carbon. Importantly, the authors are careful to avoid overstating the case, emphasizing repeatedly that carbon payments and local monitoring can be beneficial under particular circumstances but are unlikely to cover opportunity costs in high-value forest. The second part of the book presents a series of more detailed case studies at each of the K:TGAL sites, which include Nepal, India, Tanzania, Papua New Guinea and several West African countries.

The book draws on its strong empirical foundations to deliver some important insights for REDD+. It demonstrates convincingly that local people are capable of collecting high-quality monitoring data that are not significantly different from data collected by professional experts, and at a much lower cost; that carbon payments at the local level of around USD 5 per tonne can result in improved returns for local people from community forest management, provided that they are still allowed to collect high-value forest products such as firewood; and that locally collected data are better than remote sensing data at picking up relatively small changes in carbon stocks in degraded forest. The book makes a series of recommendations for the design of REDD+. These include (1) crediting only measured increases in forest carbon under community forest management, because measuring avoided deforestation and degradation in degraded forests is technically too challenging to be worth doing given the relatively low baseline rates of loss, and (2) paying communities that are compliant with management plans for the act of monitoring carbon stocks, rather than for carbon produced. This would avoid equity issues arising from different growth rates of different forests and reduce incentives for cheating.

The book takes a generally optimistic view of REDD+ and could give more attention to concerns such as the lack of political incentives for powerful bodies to cede control over management and monitoring to local communities, and the challenge of convincing the UNFCCC to accept locally collected data. Nonetheless, it provides an important and timely injection of robust empirical data to the REDD+ debate and makes a convincing case for involving local community groups in the monitoring of carbon in degraded forests.

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**A Thousand Years of Whaling: A Faroese Common Property Regime** by Seán Kerins (2011), iv + 191 pp., CCI Press, Edmonton, Canada. ISBN 9781896445526 (pbk), CAN 40.00.

Whaling has been a hot conservation topic for decades, reaching far outside scientific circles to prompt parliamentary debates and become the focus of Oscar-nominated documentaries. Initially it was concern for the precipitous decline of whale stocks and the ability of the International Whaling Commission to manage them that resulted in the infamous moratorium on commercial whaling in 1986. In the decades that followed the science improved and whale stocks began to recover, yet the ban on commercial whaling remained as issues of sustainability became overshadowed by arguments over animal welfare and necessity.

Indeed public and political opinion over whaling activities is now passionately divided. In one corner there are those who believe the sustainable hunting of whales is a legitimate form of fishing and in many cases fundamental to the cultural identity of coastal communities. In the other there are those who regard whaling as a barbarous activity, unnecessary in a modern world.

Since the 1980s the traditional hunting of pilot whales in the Faroe Islands—the *grindadráp*—has been a campaign focus for international animal rights and environmental organizations. Opposition has been fierce, with the anti-whaling movement condemning the way whales are slaughtered, the sustainability of the hunt and its management, and the cultural and economic justification for what they consider a gruesome tradition.

This book explores the arguments made by the anti-whaling organizations in opposition to pilot whaling, balancing their claims against the reality of the modern *grindadráp*. However, in doing this Kerins' goal is not to support or denounce either side of the argument but simply to allow readers to consider the *grindadráp* in its proper historical, economic and cultural context.

The book begins with an overview of whaling and the philosophy of anti-whaling protests. Whilst there are entire books devoted to these subjects, this chapter, written from a social science perspective, offers up

fresh opinions on the motivations of the anti-whaling movement. I readily suggest this chapter as recommended reading to anyone interested in the debate on whaling.

The following two chapters set the scene of the study and are essentially an extended introduction and methodology. Here Kerins provides a meticulous account of his experience of modern day life in the Faroes, and in doing so begins the book's aim of describing the context of the *grindadráp*. This is followed by a chapter outlining the study's theoretical framework and, although I found this rather wordy and too long, it demonstrates Kerins' diligence in this study.

Suitably briefed by first three chapters, I found myself absorbed by the fourth: a long and detailed history of pilot whaling in the Faroes. To me this was probably the most important section of the book as it runs through the introduction of whaling to the islands and how the institution that is the *grindadráp* has developed over the past thousand years. Through this well-referenced historical narrative the importance of hunting pilot whales becomes clear, initially as a resource and in time as a centrepiece of cultural identity.

Here too Kerins narrates the development of property rights, whaling legislation and an increasingly sophisticated management framework that has been in place in one form or another for over 500 years. I was surprised to learn that detailed records of pilot whale hunts began in 1584 and continue today, offering what must be one of the longest continuous records of wildlife exploitation available.

Throughout the first four chapters Kerins makes only fleeting references to the pilot whale hunt itself. Instead these chapters carefully build the context and the history of the hunt, treating the issue with complete objectivity. It is only in the fifth chapter that the *grindadráp* is finally described at length and in meticulous detail. Whether this structuring is intentional or not, I am certain I would have felt differently about the hunt if I had read this chapter first without the cultural understanding gained through the preceding chapters.

Ultimately I felt this was the purpose of the book. It is not a glossy commentary on whaling but a sociological description of Faroese resource use. While I admit that didn't find it an easy read, there is no doubt that this book provides a comprehensive and carefully researched thesis on Faroese pilot whaling.

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### **Wired Wilderness: Technologies of Tracking and the Making of Modern**

**Wildlife** by Etienne Benson (2010), ix + 251 pp., The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, USA. ISBN 9780801897108 (hbk), USD 55.00/GBP 28.50.

This book contains a history of radio tracking techniques, including not only the successes reported in the scientific literature but also the failures and half successes in the development of techniques for animal tracking. The book uses oral histories, archives and news reports to reconstruct the biopolitics in the history of conducting research with radio tracking in the USA. Presenting four case studies, the book follows the human stories behind radio tracking research.

Firstly, the book explores the work of two of the first groups in the USA to develop radio tags for ecological studies of animals in the late 1950s: William H. Marshall and colleagues at the Cloquet Forest Research Centre and Dwain W. Warner and colleagues at the Cedar Creek Natural History Area, both part of the University of Minnesota. Their trials in gaining support and funding for the research, as well as the development of practical radio tracking tools, are detailed, and they are presented as pioneers who helped gain fiscal support for animal research by presenting it to cold-war era institutions as relevant in the arms race.

The second chapter focuses on the work of John and Frank Craighead in Yellowstone National Park, starting with their tagging of wild grizzly bears at the support of the Park Service. The chapter follows their scientific investigations and the changes in the role of National Parks and Park Services between the late 1950s and mid 1980s. It is in this chapter that the personalities of the characters involved shine through most, and the clashes between two theories of park management at Yellowstone, traditional wilderness protection and new methods in wilderness management, are also examined.

This chapter is followed with one presenting the Smithsonian–Nepal Tiger Ecology Project, the first to radio track tigers in the wild. It follows the relationships of personalities within the project, and institutional relationships between the Smithsonian, WWF–US and WWF International and the Nepalese government. Approaches to tiger research in India and Nepal, and differences in expectations of the project from the Smithsonian and Nepalese government are also contrasted. I found this chapter easier to read than the previous two, and I was interested in its portrayal of the difficulties in international research and funding

collaborations, something which many people have experienced but which is not often found in project reports or published articles.

The final chapter outlines the challenges to radio tagging faced by marine mammal researchers in the USA. In addition to detailing some of the practical challenges of adapting radio-tagging equipment to marine species, the implications of the Marine Mammals Protection Act of 1972 for scientific research are explored by focusing on research into killer whales. As this last chapter details a variety of projects, I felt it gave a better overview of its topic than the previous chapters. The author also makes a short detour into more recent events when he details the campaign and attempted release of Keiko, the whale featured in the film *Free Willy*.

It is interesting to read a history that contains a lot of oral sources and focuses more on the political hurdles and conflicts that both scientists and policy-makers can encounter. However, readers looking for a comprehensive and contemporary history of radio-tracking techniques should look elsewhere: the majority of the book focuses on pre-1990 events, with only short detours (such as information on the attempted release of Keiko and Dave Anderson's albatross project).

The focus of the book is very much on the individuals involved in the histories, which leads to a lack of connectivity between chapters. This means that it is difficult to see an overall theme or message from the complete text, and at times the reader is overwhelmed with a flood of names, acronyms and locations that may be unfamiliar to those from outside the USA. Once immersed in the writing style however, these individual stories provide colour and depth to a unique study of biopolitics in the history of animal tracking.

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