

Conservationists seldom have campaigns called Save the Protists or solicit funds for protecting slime moulds. When I joined the ranks, the term 'preservationist' was being considered for ditching; in 2005, Peter Taylor's Earthscan book for BANC was titled *Beyond conservation*; in Conservation – a fading label? ECOS 34(1) 61-63, 2013, he asks "Is the very word 'conservation' a dead parrot? Is it an old paradigm in a new era?", when such words as 'rewilding' are fresh and sexy and the old conservation mentality is considered stale and dull. These may be overlapping labels, but they do not mean the same thing, and suit rather different views of the world.

10. Arran Stibbe (2012) Today we live without them: the erasure of animals and plants in ecological discourse ECOS 33(1) 47-53; and see *Animals erased: discourse, ecology and reconnection with the natural world*, Wesleyan University Press, 2012.
11. Quoted in Martin Spray (2007) 'Also he loved a tree' ECOS 28(1) 27-40, which enlarges a little of some other points made here. See also 'Doing without nature' ECOS 27(1) 9-13, 2006.

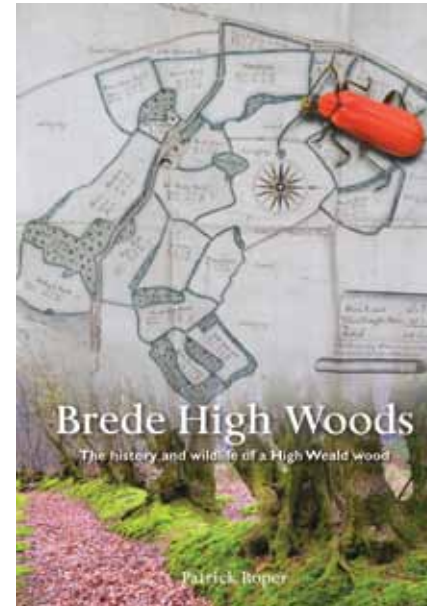
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My thanks to Matthew Oates and the VINE email discussion for promoting the adaption of Welsh terms by (the) English.

The Environment Agency prepares emergency pumps to remove flood water from the Somerset Levels, winter 2014.



Book Reviews



BREDE HIGH WOODS **The history and wildlife of a High Weald woodland**

Patrick Roper

Woodland Trust, 2013, 183 pages

Pbk, £9.99, ISBN 978-0-9566409-1-8

This book is a celebration of one man's devotion to a magical area of the High Weald in Sussex. Patrick Roper has spent over half a century investigating and recording wildlife in the complex matrix of habitats that make up Brede High Woods. His work and dedication made possible its designation as a Site of Nature Conservation Importance.

Thanks to the archaeological studies of Nicola Bannister in 2009, the book is able to wrap the history of the woods and local

area around the landscape and species found there today. It looks as far back as the *urwald*, north-west Europe's primeval forest, through the impacts of various human ages, to the careful restoration and management now being carried out.

Brede High Woods is made up of nine larger ancient woods, such as Greenenden Wood, once called 'Grenedene' from the Old English meaning 'green valley'. Each has its own suite of species, like rare seeding wild service trees, and special characteristics, including charcoal hearths and Iron Age 'bloomeries', to charm modern explorers.

It is the sheer range of different habitats that makes Brede so special – acid grassland, heathland, wetlands, ponds, streams, a reservoir, scrub, coppice and scalloped rides also burgeon with life. Roper builds up a fantastic picture of the array of habitats and wildlife you can encounter at Brede, illustrated by some splendid photographs he has taken over the years. Habitats supporting rare and specialist species are particularly important for nature conservation. Roper has recorded adders, great crested newts, dormice, nightjars and grizzled skippers, and ancient woodland indicators such as green hellebore, opine and guelder rose. Brede also supports a population of the more controversial wild boar.

Like many UK ancient woodland sites, sections of Brede High Woods were negatively affected by past forestry policy, which saw the felling of many native broadleaf trees and the dense planting of non-native conifers. The work being carried out to restore these areas is important for supporting the ancient woodland and species still remaining. Good management is allowing populations of once scarce species, like

common dodder, lousewort and heath dog-violet, to grow and expand. All changes are carefully recorded by Roper to show wildlife gains over time.

The book is easily broken down into chapters that look, among other things, at the wood's geography and geology, industrial past, habitats, birds and invertebrates. Yet each of these separate themes captures elements of the others, building a fuller picture of Brede through the millennia. Two useful chapters for anyone particularly keen to visit are seasonal highlights and suggested walking routes. As with many UK woods, spring is an optimal time to meander through Brede. Bluebells and wood anemones please the eye, early butterflies revel in the warming sun, and a host of birds fill the air with song as they nest, while lizards and snakes rouse from their winter hibernation.

The more academic historical and ecological facts of Brede are interlaced with Roper's obvious passion for a place that holds great emotional significance for him (his now wife first took him to visit the woods); all written in an engaging manner. The book very much entices the reader to go to Brede, and I for one have added it to my must-see list.

Kay Haw

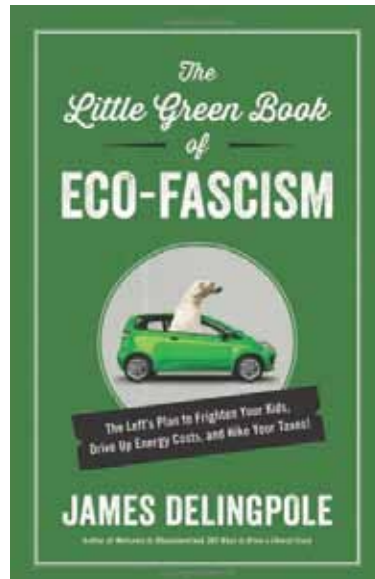
THE LITTLE GREEN BOOK OF ECO-FASCISM

The plan to frighten your kids, drive up energy costs and hike your taxes!

James Delingpole

Biteback Publishing, 2014, 331 pages
£14.99 Pbk, ISBN 978184954635 5

If you've not encountered him, James Delingpole is a right wing blogger and



former *Telegraph* writer who counters mainstream environmental viewpoints. He relishes conflict and is happy to pick a fight with fellow journalists of a different ideology. His favourite sport is taking on climate change campaigners and advocates of wind turbines. *Guardian* readers in particular are unlikely to warm to him.

The book is an A-Z guide to all that Delingpole despises about what he sees as lefty-green activism. There are entries for the University of East Anglia and its saga of hosting many of the climategate emails, which showed academics rigging the peer review process on climate change material and revealing their own infighting when interpreting their climate research. There is a four page assault on the Met Office for its biased stance on climate change, as the author would see it. The RSPB cops it for its controversial stance in taking income from wind energy schemes and having a strident view on climate change, and even some of its own members are encouraging it to back away from promoting wind turbines and

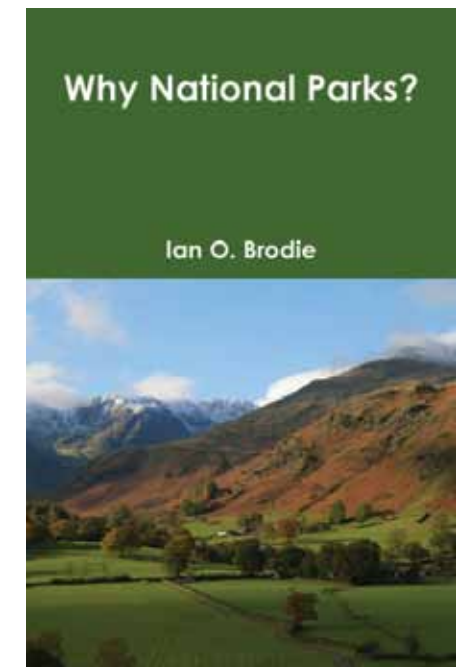
to stick to what it is good at. In some circles the organisation is now dubbed the Royal Society for the Prevention of Birds. Throughout the book, eco writers, journalists and commentators all cop it, as well as charities and institutions that promote environmental regulation and offend Delingpole's libertarian views. And there is a twist to the debate, with Delingpole arguing that his vision of the countryside is the greener one, given that it would not be assaulted from the developments required for climate mitigation policies and industrial renewable energy.

Although amusing at times, and written in an engagingly grumpy tone, much of the book's content is spiteful and shallow. The author is getting things off his chest and settling scores with some of his foes. Right wing challenges to environmental protection are nothing new, but why do environmentalists find themselves under such vicious attack in this book? Delingpole would claim that the climate change debate should hinge on empirical data, not model outputs which may be running hot. He is bothered by the metropolitan intelligentsia who won't look beyond alarmist headlines, and who assume *Guardian* briefings are the final word on the matter. Delingpole dislikes moral bullying and environmentalists' retreat to the moral high ground in their pronouncements. Indeed as I write this, the Green Party has called for politicians with a different view on climate change evidence to theirs, to be constrained from any Ministerial status. I would suggest that to gag those who disagree with you, and to refuse debate, is a dubious approach and is far from wise on a tactical front. Shrill and autocratic demands are rarely influential in any situation.

When I dip into Delingpole's scathing remarks on green fundamentalism, I worry

at how green causes are perceived by others, and can too readily be labelled as one homogenous group. There are plenty of reasonable and discriminating voices who might even agree with Delingpole's stance on some topics, albeit from a different worldview. While Delingpole's book hints at a UKIP agenda which may frighten many progressive green-minded individuals, it should act as a nudge to the more fundamentalist greens – somebody is prepared to fight fire with fire, and there may be many more like him.

Wendy Neville



WHY NATIONAL PARKS?

Ian Brodie

Wildtrack Publishing, 2013, 144 pages
Pbk £14.50 ISBN 978-1-904098-52-2

Few people are better qualified to write on National Parks than Ian Brodie, whose

background is the Lake District, where he served on the National Park Authority, and from his time campaigning for landscape conservation.

Brodie's concern for National Parks is timely. "The Greenest Government Ever" cut the Parks' spending power by nearly a third between 2010 and 2014, resulting in job losses and reduced capability. It has been a struggle to defend the Parks against planning relaxations, including a crazy proposal to allow any farmer to develop up to three open market houses on the site of redundant barns without planning permission. It seems that governments don't see the point of National Parks, or even that they are somehow qualitatively different from the rest of the exploitable countryside. The 15 National Parks together cost the taxpayer only £75m (the equivalent of a can of coke and a mars bar each), but governments sense they could improve re-election chances if this money could be spent elsewhere.

The book asks four questions:

First, how valid today are the values that led to the designation of national parks?

Second, why should we strongly protect only part of the countryside?

Third, is there a vision to re-establish designated landscapes to meet the needs of present and future societies without compromising the original values?

Fourth, has the case for these areas been overtaken by the changing demands of modern society?

In the introduction, Brodie states "The history of this [landscape conservation] movement is not the subject of this publication". In reality a great deal of

space is devoted to historical analysis of how we arrived at the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949, from the twin forces of the landscape aesthetic and the countryside access movements, and the different but largely compatible values and visions they brought in. This is a fascinating read, and a very scholarly approach, with many long quotations from the main actors of the time. I learnt a great deal about the passions and energy of our grandparents.

National Parks were, and hopefully still are, prized for their "treasure of scenery, wildness and natural beauty", and for their ability to provide quiet recreation and spiritual uplift to their visitors. It's all complicated though, because wild as they look, all are the product of untold generations of marginally economic agricultural management, and greater access carries the danger of physical and aesthetic damage. The 15 National Parks may arguably represent the best of our countryside, but the much greater expanse of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are not far behind, and the distinction seems arbitrary. Perhaps a more modern approach would see a graduated degree of enlightened landscape protection across *all* of the country. However, National Parks and especially AONBs have never been given the clout and funding they need to do a good job, so this isn't likely to happen.

A lot has changed in the 60-odd years the Parks have been going. Agricultural economics have changed, hill farmers are extremely hard pressed to survive, and without them the landscapes will evolve, or go down the pan, depending on your viewpoint. The impoverished post-war heroes of the late forties for whom the access was rightly thought

invaluable, now have cars and money to go overseas for their holidays. Unlike most countries' National Parks, most land still belongs to individuals within the Parks, not the state or the public, and conflicts of interest are inevitable.

As the Parks' relevance to the average Brit has declined, the economic pressures on parks for jobs, mineral extraction, housing development, wind turbines, road development and big leisure facilities increases, and without strong planning, the intrinsic beauty of the Parks would decline. How much economic growth can a landscape sustain?

I found the book hugely enlightening, but failed to get any sense of a way forward. These are beautiful places, national assets for sure, but not as appreciated as they were. We now better understand the importance of experiencing nature for human health and wellbeing. National Parks show us what we have lost elsewhere, and can point to how the rest of the country should be managed. Having buffered them from the colossal impacts of the last 60 years, it would be criminal to abandon them to the exploiting hands of developers now.

For me the biggest omission in the book is a lack of discussion of the influence of the status of 'National Park' on the 443,000 people living in them, and the corresponding attitudes of the Parks' population to the designation. While tighter planning controls in the Parks can cause individual resentment to applicants, they are often appreciated by the applicant's neighbours, and local people are fiercely proud of their landscapes. It's tough for a farmer or business man to have to negotiate extra rules that would not exist over the hill,

outside the Park. The premium for a freehold property in a National Park varies from 27% to 90%, so housing for the poorly-off rural inhabitants is a massive, unsolved problem. Nevertheless, the Parks' 70 million annual visitors spend £4.9bn, sustaining many local livelihoods and businesses.

Given the complexity of the book's content an index would have been a great help. The extensive bibliography is also inexplicably divided into sections of books, edited volumes of chapters, government publications, tracts, conference proceedings and the like, confounding locating a source.

We love National Parks because they appear "natural", because they are under-developed, because the landscape didn't fit industrialisation or intensive farming. This means they are financially poor, and the people who live there, who we rely on to maintain the qualities we like, are greatly under rewarded for the services they provide. I don't think this book gives us the way forward, but by gum it is food for thought.

Steve Head

THE COMING OF AGE OF THE GREEN COMMUNITY

My neighbourhood, my planet

Erik Bichard

Routledge, 2014, 138 pages

£80 Hbk ISBN 978-0-415-51761-4

Anyone who is interested in fracking needs to read chapter three. It is a factual briefing as well as an account of opposition, protest and 'how is it for you?' in surrounding communities in the USA. I learnt that over 750 different chemicals have been used, so

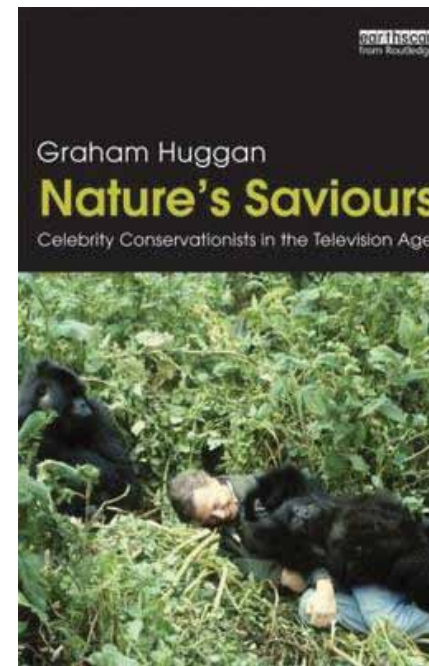
far, in fracking processes and there are prolonged struggles between local and federal or State legislation aiming to regulate or free the frackers. This is one of five long but readable chapters detailing green community activism. The first one, titled 'Living with the gold standard' is about sustaining the 'sustainable' suburbs in Freiburg Germany; another describes environmental 'clean up the neighbourhood and nourish green spaces' projects spearheading urban renewal. Another chapter describes Cheshire villagers' energy saving successes while tenaciously aiming to go carbon neutral.

The ideas of TRANSITION town groups and the OCCUPY movement get mentions but there is a whiff of something a bit old fashioned about some of the text, for example in use of the terms environmentalism and green communities. The summary chapter, which is the nub of the book, is titled 'Has the green community come of age?' I would say that much of the achievement described is about poverty alleviation, social justice and the social aspects of sustainability as well as anything 'green' in that older more environmental sense. What does 'green' mean these days? But perhaps I am tripping up over an attempt by the author to take an inclusive and wide ranging view of community activism. He does specifically point out the different starting points, motivations and life stories of people he has interviewed and how many don't think of themselves as environmentalists (or 'ists' of any sort), they are just making their communities and neighbourhoods better, in their view. At the very end the point is made, by quoting Paul Hawken, that environmentalists and social justice activists have to work together as 'there is only one bus'.

However I will be more definite in saying that the author has an old fashioned approach to research method, especially in researching community activism. These days the academics I know are abuzz about scholar activism, participatory action research, researcher and activist co-design delivery and analysis of research, and other attempts to research with communities and activists, preferably for mutual benefit. No doubt some of these changes of approach are responses to general calls for academic research to have more impact in the world but more specifically this is about banishing previous methods of extracting information from people and then disappearing. It is another sort of social justice and acknowledgement of the value of many sorts of expertise and wisdom. So it seems almost quaint to imagine months of interviews done and written up like this book, all to produce a few pages of reflection at the end. Do the people in the book even know that this book has been published?

The reflections usefully include references to the work of Elizabeth Ostrom's economies of cooperation and comments about governance and scale (global, local). But I particularly enjoyed the eight pages about Incredible Edible Todmorden: "its clear when you talk to these committed and focussed people that [the way this project happens benefits from a woman's perspective". It is a delightfully appreciative and warm account which deliberately draws out the Incredible Edible Todmorden qualities of humour and kindness, cheekiness and serendipity, trust and mutuality. And, of course, they produce food as well as cheer up the Police Station.

Alison Parfitt



NATURE'S SAVIOURS
Celebrity Conservationists in the television age

Duncan Huggan

Routledge, 2013, 248 pages

£26.99 Pbk, ISBN 978-0-415-51914-4

Nature's Saviours examines how constructs of media operate through the personalities of five prominent 20th century media figures. However, the somewhat arch subtitle 'Celebrity conservationists in the television age' is at variance with the tendency of the actual work. This is not an exposé to join the tidal waves of sensational coverage of the famous; Professor Huggan explores the medium as much as the message. The utility of employing mass communication to advance the claims of nature conservation in general and certain issues in particular, is here not as significant as the assumptions that manifest themselves in broadcasting; historical, cultural or political.

This is not disinterested observation, nor the somewhat earnest clipboard and one-way mirrors, carefully constructed interview approach of the social scientist doing field work in a lab coat. The cultural studies project has, if anything, striven to disclose the essential class basis (now inherent racial bias also) of media production, evaluation and promotion in this post-colonial, post modern world. The method is an elaborate one, borrowing on social psychology and contemporary literary criticism (particularly semiotics) than any analysis of conservation as science. For example Dian Fossey is here an exemplar of something more than the conservation of threatened Mountain Gorillas: She is a brand – an industry.

The force of Huggan's arguments are found in the breadth of his research, including what others have written before him. *Nature's Saviours* raises many interesting points and drills down into the subject; but by the finish one is putting down a book that has marshalled opinions to present an overview, at all times insistent, utilising a theoretical approach that resonates with presumed authority.

Television, like film production, and publishing before them, can be cast as the product of a social class system (here, late capitalism), one which projects the economic interests of the dominant social class in terms of ideology and narrative. This domination may not always be obvious, but it is implicit. So runs the theory.

From the outset it is clear the book's title is ironic; Duncan Huggan's is not an adulatory text or anything like. Neither is he intent upon the kind of criticism that dwells on the usual vulgarities

that shroud 'celebrity' in our time. The theory demands more. *Nature's Saviours* cast list is, in order of appearance, David Attenborough, Jacques Yves Cousteau, Dian Fossey, David Suzuki and Steve Irwin. Even the author must admit these are far from similar people with vastly differing public perceptions of their personas. They are also well spaced over time and exposure: It was an age ago that I last saw Cousteau on television; Attenborough is still there, 60 years on. Dian Fossey was never a television pundit, and the chapter on her posthumous status does somewhat depend on its projection in a major motion picture *Gorillas in the Mist* and Miss Sigourney Weaver, the distinguished actress who portrayed Fossey on the big screen. It is a mixed cast by any standard. Given such a group, it might be intended that they are to be regarded as facets of an overall single celebrity. Vulgarly, it might just be they are, or have been, on the telly.

The questions and issues *Nature's Saviours* raises may well be marginal to most working in conservation; the reach of Huggan's research and meditations would stretch anyone; apart from social scientists, Huggan cites such commentators on the 'natural' and its 'saviours' as Susan Sontag, John Berger and Adam Curtis to rewarding effect; but how many conservationists have been attracted to these cultural critics for what they had to say about environment and natural history?

Graham Huggan writes well and this examination of the finger prints of ideology (competing or contradictory) that are inevitably left by the process of visualising nature in an age of mass communication is a serious text that deserves recognition.

Barry Larking

The scale of the Dutch pumps used for emergency flood water removal in 2014 on the Somerset Levels.

Photo: Brian Bateman, EA

