

The International Politics of Bird Conservation: Biodiversity, Regionalism and Global Governance

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EDITED BY R. TODD ENGSTROM

The following critiques express the opinions of the individual evaluators regarding the strengths, weaknesses, and value of the books they review. As such, the appraisals are subjective assessments and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editors or any official policy of the American Ornithologists' Union.

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The International Politics of Bird Conservation: Biodiversity, Regionalism and Global Governance.—Robert Boardman. 2006. Edward Elgar Publishing, Northampton, Massachusetts. x + 265 pp. ISBN 1 84542 403 4. Hardcover, \$110.00.—Robert Boardman, McCulloch Professor of Political Science at Dalhousie University, approaches bird conservation from the perspective of a political historian rather than that of an ornithologist or practicing conservation biologist. His book's eight chapters are wide-ranging, covering the history of bird conservation on all continents and discussing a wide variety of avian conservation issues. This material is used by the author to delve deeply into the causes of, and possible solutions for, our most pressing conservation problems.

After the first chapter ("Framing Birds"), which is somewhat difficult to follow, the second chapter ("The Biodiversity Project") addresses topics in bird ecology and conservation—especially interactions between birds and people—that are referred to later in the book. Boardman discusses the origins of bird conservation, describing 1870–1970 as the "early years." He includes events and developments around the world while emphasizing those in the United Kingdom, Europe, and North America. He then discusses three trends that became prominent in the 1970s: international conventions (e.g., CITES, RAMSAR), the environmental movement, and the rise of national and international bird-conservation groups. The chapter ends with a discussion of why controversies arise over bird conservation. The author focuses on the diversity of the organizations usually involved and on the political differences among them. Here, as elsewhere in the book, Boardman's expertise in political science lets him identify underlying causes of conflict that may not be apparent to biologists.

The next two chapters discuss bird conservation in North America and Europe. Boardman discusses bird conservation in North America using four themes: migratory birds; species at risk; trade liberalization, especially under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA); and what he calls "multi-actor/multi-level linkages." His comments on the first two will be familiar to most biologists, but his emphasis on NAFTA may be surprising

to many. He stresses the importance of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) under NAFTA as well as the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI), whereas I believe that most observers would characterize these groups as not yet having had a significant influence on bird conservation in North America. Another provocative view is that "non-governmental organizations have been the main drivers of conservation in North America for more than a century." I suspect that many in federal, provincial, and state agencies would disagree, despite the evidence he presents in support of his views. I found his discussion of bird conservation in Europe—and of how multinational efforts, especially those of the European Union, have led to much stronger international conservation groups than we have in North America—especially interesting.

Chapter 6 discusses relations between more and less developed continents that share migratory birds: North and South America, Europe and Africa, and eastern and southeastern Asia. Throughout, Boardman emphasizes the importance of economic factors, such as the type of economy (e.g., crop-based vs. industrialized) and the wealth or power of the countries, in determining how conservation issues are approached. Here as elsewhere, he brings a fresh and useful perspective to the discussion of why conservation efforts have succeeded or failed and how future efforts can be more successful. Given the critical importance of developing areas in bird conservation and the dependence of these areas on wealthier nations, the discussion in this chapter should be of particular interest to those working on international bird conservation.

The last of the regional chapters discusses the polar regions, though Boardman emphasizes that they have great differences from a bird-conservation perspective. As in other chapters, he concentrates on organizations devoted to bird conservation and on how well they have functioned, rather than on the issues themselves. He discusses programs of the Arctic Council, especially the Programme for the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF), in detail, generally giving these activities more prominence than I would have expected. In the Antarctic, he

concentrates on the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS) and the many difficulties of insuring adequate conservation in the Antarctic. The detailed account of conservation efforts through 2004 will be of interest to anyone working in this important region.

Boardman opens the final chapter by posing the questions that the book attempts to answer: “What are the governance arrangements for conserving the world’s bird biodiversity? How are these structured and what factors create, nourish and stunt them?” He repeats his belief that government agencies cannot, by themselves, achieve effective bird conservation, remarking, for example, that if “governments were to be removed from the world of bird conservation, a large chunk of the overall global effort would still thrive.” He adds, however, that “neither states nor NGOs acting in isolation from the other hold the key to effective long-term conservation.” Turning to ways of improving bird-conservation activities, he rejects the creation of a mega-bird-conservation organization comparable to the World Health Organization or World Trade Organization, not only because creating such an organization would be impractical but, more importantly, because “it is not self-evident that such an institution would augment significantly the stock of conservation achievements attainable by other means.” Instead, he advises bird-conservation professionals to focus on stronger links between regions, especially North America and Europe; more sophisticated “flyway organizations”; enhanced data repositories; and improved multilateral environmental agreements of several specific types.

Overall, this book presents a comprehensive review of what has worked or not worked in bird conservation around the world and how we can achieve more success in future efforts. Although I often found the writing difficult, the emphasis on foundational or structural features of economic, political, and government systems, and their influence on bird conservation outcomes, is a fresh and useful perspective and one that all conservation biologists would benefit from studying.—JONATHAN BART, *U.S. Geological Survey, Boise, Idaho 83706, USA. E-mail: jon.bart@usgs.gov*

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The Lapwing.—Michael Shrubbs, with drawings by Robert Gillmor. 2007. T & A D Poyser, London. 232 pp., 29 color plates, 19 black-and-white drawings, 53 figures, 19 tables, 4 appendices. ISBN 978-0-7136-6854-4. Cloth, \$ 84.30.—The publication of a new book by Poyser, which is renowned for highly authoritative monographs, is met with great expectations from many ornithologists. Dealing with a charismatic Palearctic shorebird, *The Lapwing* by Michael Shrubbs is no exception. Considering the traditionally great interest in the natural history of Northern Lapwings (*Vanellus vanellus*; hereafter “lapwings”), not least in Britain, I am probably not alone in finding this a long-awaited publication.

The book begins with a brief overview of field characteristics and distribution of all 24 species in the genus *Vanellus* and a closer introduction to the focal species. This is followed by a discussion of the lapwing’s breeding distribution and densities, including a review of population estimates across Europe. Two chapters are

assigned to breeding habitat and population changes. The author discusses continental Europe and Britain separately, because of notable differences in population trends and agricultural practices. Further, winter patterns of distribution, population sizes, and habitat use are presented, as well as food and feeding behavior. Five chapters summarize aspects of breeding biology, namely arrival and territorial activity, courtship and pair formation, the egg period, nesting success, chick rearing, and fledging success. Other chapters discuss movement patterns, mortality, and directions for future conservation of the species. Four appendices provide details on population changes in Europe, breeding habitats, diet, and scientific names of species mentioned in the text. Robert Gillmor has illustrated the book with brilliant black-and-white drawings that serve as visual introductions to each chapter. Chapter 5 includes 29 color photographs showing the lapwing’s appearance, behavioral aspects, and habitat types. Four of the photos show other lapwing species.

On the book’s cover, Shrubbs is presented as a retired farmer who “has enjoyed a lifetime of study on Lapwings.” Actively involved in British lapwing conservation and having published research papers on the species’ biology and its population status in the United Kingdom, Shrubbs is clearly an expert on conservation of farmland birds and their habitats. Some readers will recognize him as the author of *Birds, Scythes and Combines* (Shrubbs 2003). *The Lapwing* clearly builds upon Shrubbs’s earlier publications, drawing on his knowledge of how farming has affected bird populations in Europe throughout the past 200 years—and how it continues to do so. As the author writes, “there is inevitably a great deal of agriculture in this book.” From my point of view, this is in fact the book’s greatest strength.

I found the chapters on population regulation and population effects of human activities highly informative. Lapwings were hunted in the past, and their eggs collected for food, in several European countries. The eggging activity was almost like an industry in some places. For instance, Shrubbs mentions that an amazing 800000 eggs were imported annually to London from the Friesland region in the Netherlands during the 1870s. Protective legislative measures restricting hunting and egg collection in most places led to considerable increases in both distribution and population sizes during much of the 20th century. However, in recent decades, it has become increasingly apparent that the species has a highly unfavorable population status in many European countries. There is now compelling evidence that this is largely a result of recent changes in agricultural practices. *The Lapwing* provides a detailed review of how this situation has arisen and how modern agriculture causes problems for lapwings and other farmland birds.

Presentations of populations, habitat choice, and conservation-related issues make up more than half the book. In addition to a general overview of these topics, readers will find detailed and insightful discussions regarding the various problems lapwings are facing and possible solutions for counteracting population decline and restoring habitats. The complexity of conservation issues is well illustrated by the fact that while the British breeding population was sharply declining, the numbers of birds wintering in Britain showed a concomitant increase. This may seem counterintuitive to people inexperienced in ecological thinking, and good communication skills may be required to convince some that lapwings are indeed threatened in the country.