

REVIEW

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Endangered and Threatened Animals of Florida and Their Habitats, by Chris Scott, University of Texas Press, 2003, 448 pages; hardcover \$60, ISBN 0-292-70529-8; paperback \$29.95, ISBN 0-292-77774-4.

The plight of Florida's wildlife and wild places continues to invite description from a variety of authors. The latest approach is supplied by Chris Scott, who is identified as a federal wildlife officer, herpetologist, and former Floridian. The largest section of the book contains species accounts of endangered and threatened animals and a discussion of the threats they face. If there's a shortcoming in this section, it's Scott's choice of species to highlight. The author has focused on federally-listed species including such rarities as Ivory-billed Woodpecker (*Campephilus principalis*), Bachman's Warbler (*Vermivora bachmanii*), and Kirtland's Warbler (*Dendroica kirtlandii*), while ignoring some state-listed species whose plight is less well known and might have benefited from coverage. I feel that Scott's book could have been of more service to readers interested in wildlife conservation if he had devoted some space to species such as American Oystercatcher (*Haematopus palliatus*), Roseate Spoonbill (*Platalea ajaja*), and Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*) that are state-listed or not yet listed as endangered or threatened, but whose status is cause for concern because of habitat loss or degradation.

The rest of the book is devoted to topics ranging from the descriptions of various habitats to the history of environmental protection in Florida. Although Scott seems to have conducted quite a bit of research in completing these sections, it is clear that either his research or his fact-checking was faulty. These sections contain numerous errors. Those errors include everything from the number of parrot species roaming South Florida and the date of the last Florida record of Key West Quail-Dove (*Geotrygon chrysis*) to the locations of the Florida Marine Patrol and the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission on the state government organizational chart before their merger into the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, or the current name of Florida's conservation land-buying program.

Nevertheless, Scott's book contains quite a bit of useful information and readers will gain useful knowledge as long as they read carefully. The first chapter contains an overview of both the disappearance and decline of a number of species as well as some of the environmental threats they face (e.g., road kills, habitat loss, commercial exploitation). He includes a brief and rather superficial discussion about environmental pollution, which certainly degrades some habitats in Florida to the point that wildlife is affected. That follows with a chapter on the impact of exotic species on Florida's environment and some native species. Of interest are his account of the interactions between native green anoles (*Anolis carolinensis*) and brown anoles (*Anolis sagrei*) from the West Indies, and his recognition of the role of domestic pets in wildlife predation. He lists invasive plants, too, but the list is notable for the absence of mention of Chinese tallow tree (*Sapium sebiferum*), which is now regarded as one of the worst plant pests in the Southeast, or Japanese or European climbing ferns (*Lygodium* spp.), major threats in central and southern Florida. This is an example of a problem throughout the book: the lack of up-to-date information. Next Scott takes on Florida's population growth and its impact on wildlife; he briefly discusses some of the ecological problems caused by overenthusiastic ecotourists. What follows is a history of environmental regulations in Florida and the nation. This account is at times a bit disjointed, in some cases unfocused, and occasionally wrong chronologically. For instance, Scott refers to the "Only You Can Prevent Forest Fires" slogan as being from the 1960s, when in fact it is decades older. From there he meanders into a discussion of the fate of several endangered species, such as the black-

footed ferret (*Mustela nigripes*), that really have nothing to do with Florida. Next the author sets out to describe Florida's various natural habitats, with lists of some of the common and rare species of animals that inhabit each. It is a mystery, though, why he chose to lump pine flatwoods, which is a widespread Florida habitat type, and dry prairie, which is much more restricted geographically, into a single account. The result is a jumble in which least skippers (*Amblyscirtes alternata*) are mentioned one paragraph ahead of Panama City crayfish (*Procambarus econfinae*). There is no mention of the discovery in recent years of the fact that dry prairies—particularly Kissimmee Prairie State Preserve—are a major habitat for many butterflies. Also, this account could give readers the impression that feral hogs (*Sus scrofa*) and nine-banded armadillos (*Dasyurus novemcinctus*) pose an equal threat to environmental lands; they do not. Readers have to go to another section of the book to discover that feral hogs are the most destructive introduced mammal species in Florida. Consistency would have been helpful.

The book has a glossary, which is useful when Scott lapses into technical jargon for no apparent reason during some sections of the book. There also are several color photos of many of the species mentioned in the book, appendices, and an index. The book includes an extensive bibliography for readers seeking additional information. Despite its shortcomings, this book provides readers with a good sense of the issues facing Florida's wildlife and is generally written in a clear style.—Tom Palmer, 1805 26th St. NW, Winter Haven, FL 33881.