
REVIEWS

Moser, M. & Finlayson, M. (eds). 1991. *Wetlands*.

Facts on File, Oxford & New York. £19.95.

Never before has there been such a demand for food from the ever increasing human population of this planet. However, whilst wetlands are amongst the most productive of all ecosystems, they are under unprecedented threat the world over. This lavishly illustrated volume from IWRB highlights his paradox whilst celebrating the beauty and natural values of these systems.

Wetlands draws its inspiration from a number of regional wetland inventories that have been produced by IWRB over the last 20 years. These detailed texts have received only limited circulation amongst governmental and non-governmental conservation organisations. One of the stated aims of *Wetlands* is to make this material more widely accessible. In this it succeeds admirably.

Six regional chapters outlining the ecological characteristics of the principal wetland types, their values and uses, and their management and conservation are prefaced by a fascinating general account of wetlands and their values by Ed Maltby. The book is beautifully illustrated with some outstanding colour photographs, and whilst the conclusions of many chapters can make depressing reading, it avoids concentrating solely on negative aspects and emphasises some conservation success stories also. Not least in this respect is the role that the Ramsar Convention has had in advancing wetland conservation in many countries.

The multi-author text has been skilfully edited and reads easily, yet the detailed sites and species index facilitates its use for reference. Each chapter includes a number of specific case studies of wetlands and their conservation in text 'boxes'. These aid more detailed presentation of information without breaking the flow of each chapter. An appendix gives a list of all designated Ramsar sites throughout the world (– a gazetteer for a dream holiday!). This listing is impressively up-to-date, including sites that were designated in mid-February of the year of publication.

Wetlands is especially interesting not only because it presents a clear picture of ecologically fascinating wetlands and their birds the world over, but also

because it enables our own British wetlands to be placed in their global context. There can too often be an assumption that sites of global importance are found only in other countries. However, the listing of the familiar sites in Europe alongside sites such as the Okavango Delta and the Banc d'Arguin of Africa, the Florida Everglades, and the Mesopotamian Marshes emphasises the international responsibility that we have for our own wetlands. Familiarity all too often breeds apathy, if not contempt, and *Wetlands* can only help the conservation of these outstanding ecosystems by giving us a window on the wider world. At £19.95, for a ticket to roam through the wetlands of the world, it is excellent value!

David A. Stroud

