

public scrutiny and debate about the social and economic impacts of development projects. In this regard, the book will also be useful to students and researchers investigating Chinese civil society.

The book does not shy away from criticizing China's political system as a major factor contributing to environmental problems in China. The contributors note how the absence of a full-fledged public sphere where information about development projects is rendered transparent and publicly debated poses a serious danger to China's environment and sustainable economic development.

It needs to be stressed that there is a significant degree of variation in quality and sophistication among the 28 papers. Several papers fail to live up to the rigorous academic standards demanded of a book of this type. Also, there is a high degree of overlap between chapters. This is compounded by a limited attempt to link key points across chapters. I strongly recommend that readers refer to the Table of Contents before delving into this book, to select the chapter(s) most relevant to their interests and/or research requirements. Readers seeking only an overview of China's major environmental challenges should focus on Yang's Introduction.

Just as this book reflects the growing prominence of China's NGO sector in educating the public about environmental issues, it also demonstrates the increased capacity of this sector to market and promote itself. Readers need to bear in mind that this volume is unashamedly pro-NGO. The editors and contributors spend considerable time trumpeting the importance of NGOs rather than focusing on core environmental issues. The NGO sector is presented in a completely benign manner and there is a failure to account for the complexities associated with NGO project work in China. For example, environmental NGOs are consistently portrayed as serving the public interest. This tendency obscures a more complex reality whereby environmental NGOs are often accountable to private donor organizations and may promote agendas that conflict with local community interests.

In conclusion, I recommend this volume and regard it as an essential addition to library collections. The editors are aware of some of the shortcomings of this first volume and I have no doubt that the level of sophistication and academic rigor will improve in future volumes.

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Wildlife Conservation in China: Preserving the Habitat of China's Wild West, by Richard B. Harris. Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2008. xxiv + 341 pp. US\$74.95 (hardcover).

The book is based on 4 years of fieldwork in western China by a western wildlife biologist over a period of 20 years. The title is self-explanatory, and the matters

discussed range from biological and geographical topics to politico-economic issues of wildlife conservation. The Preface and Chapter 1 argue that Chinese wildlife management suffers from an inability to value wildlife for its own sake, more than from habitat destruction. The failure to value wildlife presumably leads to the failure to manage the relationship between consumption and production/harvest and protection of wildlife resources.

In Chapter 2, Harris examines geographical factors such as aridity, remoteness and the sparseness of human population of China's west. He examines ethnicity and culture, then jumps to the question of whether western China is getting drier. He follows with a section on the land tenure system of grasslands, and highlights the Chinese penchant for "scientific" fixes such as the privatization of pastoral lands. Chapter 3 presents the argument that Chinese views on wildlife are utilitarian: the Chinese value wildlife only to the extent that it is of use to humankind, rather than valuing wildlife for its own sake. When conservation initiatives are finally taken, they are couched in terms that deny any conflict between the interests of nature and the requirements of civilized humanity. Such "Confucian optimism", he argues, is paradoxically counterproductive to the aims of conservation. Chapter 4 shows that most demands for wildlife resources in China are fulfilled by captive breeding, and asks whether such breeding has any discernible negative effects on wildlife populations. The conclusion is that there is insufficient data either way.

Chapter 5 is the best argued and most coherent section of the book, and looks at the legal institutions behind the protection of wildlife, in particular the 1988 Wildlife Protection Law. Here Harris highlights a tendency in Chinese legislation to issue draconian and overly-simplistic laws which are too difficult to implement. Quoting Peter Ho, William Alford and Shen Yuanyuan, he states that, because the law is so strict, it only expresses an ideal, rather than reflecting the realities of enforcement. Chapter 6 also looks at one institutional arrangement for the protection of wildlife habitat: nature reserves. As with the 1998 Wildlife Protection Law, the gap between the stated ideal of nature reserves and their reality is evident. Once again, he sees the Chinese government's penchant for simplistic solutions, such as equating the designation of nature reserves with conservation (p. 119), as counterproductive. He argues, correctly, that quick legislative fixes and the bare designation of reserves do nothing for real conservation. Chapter 7 touches on the conservation status of eight species. Chapter 8 examines the controversial topic of trophy hunting and debunks the myth that trophy hunting has significant negative effects on species' population. He argues in favor of a "devil's bargain"—for revenue from the killing of a few beasts to be put towards conservation efforts for the rest. Chapter 9 presents a lengthy criticism of Chinese wildlife science and its lack of rigor. Chapter 10 concludes with various institutional recommendations. The essential point is that either local management authorities or the local populations should be given the incentives to manage wildlife resources on a sustainable basis.

Harris is a wildlife biologist, and embarking on this multi-disciplinary project is a laudable feat in itself. By his own admission, in writing this book he ventures into issues that are outside his expertise (p. xvii). The book contains much detailed observation from someone who has been privy to wildlife conservation in a remote part of China, and provides much insightful material for the wildlife professional or the wildlife activist. However, the material is not presented in a coherent manner that would appeal to a social scientist. It is rambling, prone to digressions, and the titles and sub-titles often offer little indication of the argument. The organization of the material also makes it difficult to follow. Chapter 2 jumps from the topic of ethnicity, to culture, to grassland aridity to degradation and to land tenure without any logic. Chapters 6 and 10 bring up land tenure repeatedly, but fail to synthesize the issue. He also tends to over-extrapolate from personal observation, and overemphasizes the failure to value wildlife for its own sake. By attributing institutional failure to a fundamental cultural tendency, he has foreclosed analysis of the political and bureaucratic reasons for the lack of meaningful institutions. Ironically, his recommendations are institutional—the “devil’s bargain”, and vesting local authorities with more land-management authority. That is, while attributing the lack of meaningful institutions to a cultural tendency, he suggests institutional fixes without examining the political reasons for such institutions lacking meaning in the first place. Moreover, by trapping himself in a cultural argument, all he ends up saying is that the Chinese are different from Westerners in their perceptions of wildlife and hence do not understand what conservation really is. It would seem that, short of transforming the Chinese into “Westerners”, there is effectively no way out of this conservation problem.

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Water and Development in China: The Political Economy of Shanghai Water Policy, by Seungho Lee. Singapore: World Scientific, 2006. xxxiv + 295 pp. US\$75.00/£41.00 (hardcover).

China’s economic performance over the past decade has been impressive. However, the double-digit economic growth has been accompanied by environmental decline which in places has been dramatic. Shanghai presents a microcosm of this broader picture, and Seungho Lee’s work provides insights into how the environmental problems associated with development-driven water pollution have been managed. Lee uses a variety of social-science methods, including those of sociology and political ecology. However, readers looking for an application of neo-classical economic theory (as could be inferred from the title) will be disappointed.

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