

Book reviews

The New Environmental Age

Max Nicholson

Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987, 232 pp., HB £15.00

Anyone who thinks about the environment sooner or later has to consider Max Nicholson's views, which are presented in his characteristic, vigorous, forceful and positive style in *The New Environmental Age*. Essentially the author has chosen his examples and facts with care in order to produce a cogent, logical, constructive and critical appraisal of the environmental movement and the challenges it faces in the future.

The author argues that the conservation movement has reached its mature phase and is beginning to speak with authority so that now environmental management policies are becoming acceptable to society. He then examines the ways by which environmental ideas and concepts are disseminated, the organizations involved and the resources available to them, before considering how environmentalists have to coexist with other groups. Nicholson rightly argues that conservation management strategies cannot be pursued by environmentalists alone and if successful conclusions are to be achieved, co-operation and interaction with other groups in 'different but converging subject areas' are essential. Nicholson then includes a fascinating chapter outlining the contribution of some of the leading individuals who have been responsible for the present-day form of the movement.

In assessing the current state of the movement, Nicholson maintains that environmentalists should strive to identify and prevent possible causes of environmental damage, attempt to change the philosophy behind policies and practices harmful to the environment, and then replace them with conservation-friendly approaches and create more environmental assets ranging from school study areas to national parks. Possibly his most important recommendation is the suggestion to encourage the change in attitude and life style of the younger generation so that they are favourable to conservation policies. Perhaps if these points can be attained, the ultimate goal can be achieved, that at some time in the future the enhanced general awareness of environmental principles and practices by society and institutions would be such that the

existence of environmentalists as a separate group would not be necessary.

Overall a good read especially if one is prepared to re-examine one's own views on the environment.

Denis Hide, North-East London Polytechnic.

The Hunting of the Whale: a tragedy that must end

Jeremy Cherfas

The Bodley Head, 1988, 239 pp., HB £12.95

This is an account of the history of whaling over 1000 years until 1987. It is filled with amazing facts, intrigue, suspense and sadness. Most importantly it concentrates several chapters on a blow by blow account of the fight for and against whaling, which has been a feature associated with meetings of the International Whaling Commission over two decades. The story not only relates to the cost to whales as individuals and to their populations, but also to its costs in human terms, such as actual or threatened loss of jobs or demotion of officials, suicide and physical attacks on delegates to the IWC. It provides a riveting account of the main events of the battle; the skill used by the protagonists to gain the initiative over their opponents is worthy of Sim Tzū, who wrote the definitive *Art of War*, over 2000 years ago.

In a wider context, *The Hunting of the Whale* perhaps provides an insight into the roles of commerce, greed, politics, bribery, nationalism and a *laissez-faire* attitude to the long-term consequences of meeting short-term requirements prevailing in other decisions by governments. Usually these, unlike the whaling issue, exclude public participation in their formulation, except those subject to confidential caveats, so the public are largely unaware of the background to decision making.

The chapter on the biology of whales provides some noteworthy facts, such as that a child could easily crawl through a blue whale's main arteries. Slimmers among the human population may have their own views on a blue whale's diet, which needs to account for about three million calories a day.

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