

**Wildlife Field Research and Conservation Training Manual**, by Alan Rabinowitz. The Wildlife Conservation Society, Bronx, New York 10460-1099, 1993. 281 pp.

This training manual was written for “the individuals responsible for protecting and managing the world’s ever diminishing wild areas.” It is designed for implementing training programs for junior staff including rangers and forest guards, and senior staff who are responsible for planning and managing conservation areas. The author is a staff member of the New York Zoological Society (now NYZS: The Wildlife Conservation Society) who is known for his research on the ecology and management of big cats and other carnivores. He has had experience teaching training courses in wildlife research and conservation in Sabah, Sarawak, China and Taiwan, and has carried out field research in Thailand. The book is intended to be studied by course trainers and course instructors, and not by all the trainees themselves, who will normally require instruction materials in their own language.

Part 1 of the book is for “the person in the field”, and heavily emphasizes basic field skills. There are chapters on map reading, field observation and note-taking, habitat description, measuring and preserving specimens, tracks and sign, interview surveys, wildlife census techniques, and ecological study of individuals or communities. The chapter on map reading is especially useful and thorough, but all provide important summaries.

Part 2 of the book is for training senior staff, and includes chapters on leadership and problem solving, planning and implementation, management plans, monitoring junior staff, field research techniques, establishment and expansion of protected areas, protection and management of protected areas, and captive breeding and reintroduction.

Part 3 covers special topics in more detail such as animal handling, preserving specimens, small mammal mark-recapture, radio telemetry, and observing animal behavior (contributed by Dr. Elizabeth L. Bennett). In addition, there are 12 appendices covering additional teaching guidelines, examples of data sheets and report forms, taxonomy, animal tracks, mammal skulls, etc.

A list of general references on each topic is given to provide more background and details needed by instructors. This is essential because few topics are treated in sufficient detail to give instructors all the knowledge that they might need. Rather, the manual is intended to provide guidance in organizing courses and in selecting the most important topics and concepts to cover. In many cases the subject material presented is overly general and instructors will need to adapt it to the particular local fauna, flora and environments.

As a general guide and source of ideas, the manual is excellent and should be studied by all persons involved in training protected area and conservation personnel. Any conservation biologist can find a few important subjects that are not included in the book. I felt that the subjects of hiking and camping craft, importance and methods of long-term monitoring, collecting plant specimens, long-term ecological research sites and use of wildlife in interpretation and education, and trail management might have been included. Maybe future editions will include some of these topics, but the book has to stop somewhere. There should also be an index.

This book is important because there are very few useful manuals for training conservation personnel, and what courses exist do not emphasize field work and wildlife enough.

In Thailand, for example, most protected area officials seem to spend too much time in the office and in their cars. Most don't seem to have the ability or inclination to lead their junior staff into the forest. Their college training does not prepare them adequately for field work. Training programs need to be overhauled and expanded to get people back into the field, where most of the problems and opportunities lie. Rabinowitz's book should help.

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