

Manual to the Conservation of Asian Hornbills by Pilai Poonswad and Alan C. Kemp. Hornbill Project Thailand, Bangkok, 1993. xi + 513. pp., 24 colour plates.

This lavish volume was produced following the First International Workshop on Hornbills and their Habitats, which was held at Khao Yai National Park during 6–10 April 1992. In fact, the second half of this book consists of the workshop proceedings in which 18 contributors outline the conservation and status of hornbills in eleven Asian countries. The first part of the book comprises chapters on the taxonomy, identification and biology of hornbills by the two editors; chapters on field study techniques from various contributors, including a section on the application of radio telemetry to hornbills by Acharn Pilai's principal collaborator, Atsuo Tsuji. There are also some excellent colour photographs of 24 hornbill species.

Acharn Pilai needs no introduction. Her own ground-breaking research, carried out since 1980, led to a series of seminal papers elucidating the biology of hornbills in the wild and earned her a doctorate from Osaka University. Almost single-handedly she has greatly raised the profile of hornbills as “flagship species” for forest conservation, and set up Hornbill Project Thailand (now transformed into the Hornbill Foundation). She and her team have conceived, initiated and implemented a range of hornbill research, conservation and education activities. Everyone who has ever “talked hornbills” with Pilai comes away energised by the radiance of her enthusiasm and her commitment, and in the current volume we can see fully how effective she has been in mobilising interest throughout the region. The workshop (and the book) concluded with the establishment of an Asian Hornbill Network and the presentation of an Action Plan, in which explicit recommendations are made for each country. This book is also being distributed to government and conservation authorities in the region.

There is a vast amount of information contained here, though the contributions vary widely, with (predictably) much more information being available for Thailand and peninsular Malaysia than for China or Laos, for example. But why are there two papers covering peninsular Malaysia but none for East Malaysia—Sabah and Sarawak—where a good deal of hornbill field research has been carried out?

The country papers each follow a similar format. While a lot of space is given to some very useful descriptions of the natural history of each species (nesting habits, seasonality, *etc.*), country-by-country, information on the contemporary status and distribution of hornbills is less well covered, reflecting the relatively poor field coverage away from a few major sites. Even for Thailand, where Dr. Pilai and her collaborators have collected much data, one was left wanting much more (on nest-densities, for example). Much of this information has already been published elsewhere, of course, but Dr. Pilai was perhaps too modest in not listing her own Ph.D. thesis or more of her published papers. Even though some of these did not appear until after the workshop, they could have been listed even as *in prep.* or *in press* in the References.

Some of the country papers contain some extremely useful vegetation or forest cover maps. The hornbill distribution maps could have been greatly improved. As it is, they take up a lot of space but do not give accurately the locations of either specimen- or sight-records, and in the case of Thailand—where they purport to show former and current distributions—could be wilfully misinterpreted by politicians and would-be loggers to

show expansion in ranges rather than expansions in coverage/knowledge which they represent. I should also like to have seen some more forceful conservation recommendations being issued to the governments who are still so actively bent on destroying hornbill habitats for profit.

Such quibbles are a necessary but not very welcome part of the reviewer's task. It should be said once and for all that organising the International Workshop on Hornbills, building and inspiring the Asian Hornbill Network, and compiling this fine book, were stupendous tasks. Dr. Pilai, Dr. Alan Kemp and their collaborators are to be heartily congratulated for their efforts.

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