

Beyond the Last Village, by Alan Rabinowitz. Island Press, Washington D.C., U.S.A., 2001. ISBN 1-55963-799-4. Hard cover.

Alan Rabinowitz describes his trail-blazing conservation work in Myanmar, carried out at the behest of the Wildlife Conservation Society and the Burmese Forest Department during 1993 to 2000. Though it may be considered politically incorrect to engage with the Burmese junta, conservationists cannot afford to be too squeamish. Man is waging a relentless war against the natural environment throughout Asia, in democracy and dictatorship alike, and the worth of any holding action undertaken now to conserve biodiversity will hopefully be recognised by the citizens of a future Burmese democracy.

Much of the book is actually taken up with the author's expeditions to the areas north of Putao, the discovery of a new species of mammal, the leaf deer *Muntiacus putaoensis*, and the setting up of Hkakabo Razi and Hukaung Valley Wildlife Sanctuaries. The style will be familiar to those who have read Rabinowitz's earlier popular books, *Jaguar* and *Chasing the Dragon's Tail*. The author writes lucidly and engagingly about this forgotten corner of Asia, describing his encounters with a range of characters including officials of the regime, ethnic minorities, monks, etc., and discussing his own fears and doubts concerning his personal life. We learn that one of the main pressures on wildlife stems from something as mundane as local peoples' need for salt, for which wildlife and wildlife body parts are traded. Actual encounters with large mammals are few and far between, most records coming from remains in hunters' houses—a familiar lot to biologists working in Southeast Asia.

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