

Book Review

THE FLORIDA MANATEE: BIOLOGY AND CONSERVATION. Roger L. Reep and Robert K. Bonde. University Press of Florida, Gainesville, 2006. ISBN 81302949X, 189 pp.

The authors of *The Florida Manatee: Biology and Conservation* have worked with this charismatic and enigmatic species for several decades, and the book reflects their breadth and depth of knowledge, the research they and others have done, some anecdotes and adventures, and some aspects of the history and current state of manatee research and conservation. Although Reep and Bonde have very different styles, considerable and largely successful effort was made to develop a book that is consistent in terms of level and tone. The resulting product is a fun and edifying read, which I recommend.

As one of the very long-term veterans of manatee research and conservation (longer even than the authors), I enjoyed reading this book a great deal as it brought back memories of people and events. Although the perspective presented leans unsurprisingly toward the authors' and their closest colleagues' own work and experiences, the contributions of many other people to science and conservation are included. Young, and even more seasoned, readers will be turned on not only by what they learn about manatees but also by what they learn about the processes of science and discovery.

Whereas Reep and Bonde have provided a comprehensive (albeit uneven) overview of science and technology, the parts of the book dealing with conservation fall a bit short. The book provides appropriate exhortation for people to do better in the future, and it mentions categories of activities that need to be promoted. It does not provide either a big-picture, compelling view or practical guidance about how to achieve good results, however, even though conservation lies near and dear to the authors' hearts.

Having said that, I want to reinforce the generally positive response I have. Although I do not entirely agree with all of the authors' opinions and interpretations, that is fair enough! They did a good job of creating an enjoyable and accessible story about manatees and people in Florida. The conversational tone will appeal to and attract readers who will doubtless be turned on by manatees and the need for farsighted conservation, although

the challenge of implementing effective and cost-effective conservation is not easily overcome.

The Florida Manatee: Biology and Conservation represents the latest in a series of books published on manatees, bottlenose dolphins, and other marine mammals found in Florida waters by the University Press of Florida. Together, they provide useful and diverse information on biology and conservation of marine mammals and the habitat on which they depend.

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