

REVIEWS

AMBIO – A JOURNAL OF THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT.

Ambio is a bi-monthly publication of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences. It caters for a range of target groups – the 'expert' environmentalists, other scientists and the interested lay person.

It is a non-profit making journal and, therefore, achieves a high quality (content and presentation) at relatively low cost. (U.S. \$ 25 p.a.). Its coverage is global.

To give an idea of this coverage I have listed a selection of topics/articles from the last five 1981 issues and from the first four 1982 issues.

Volume X Number 2 – 3 1981: This was a special double issue focussing upon the Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB). It describes the results of projects in the programme from all over the world. Of great interest also is a description of how the programme itself is evolving to adapt 'to a changing and unpredictable environment.'

Volume X Number 4 1981: In this number main features were ecological considerations of Holland's Eastern Scheldt Estuary Barrier Scheme, noise pollution in OECD countries and the economics of pollution control in U.S.A.

Volume X Number 5 1981: The focus was upon alternative sources of energy. Renewable energy sources in the third world were discussed as were specific energy plans in Kenya, the Seychelles and Sweden.

Volume X Number 6 1981: This number beamed in on the Caribbean, its growing environmental problems and some of the measures being undertaken to confront the crisis there.

Volume XI Number 1 1982: Toxics is the theme of this number. The problem of disposal of toxic wastes and the uncontrolled use of toxic pesticides are addressed. Examples of specific articles are: 'Gift of Poison – The Unacceptable Face of Development Aid' by Marcus Linear, 'Reagan's Energy Plan: Leave it to the Market Place' by Phyllis Feinmark and 'The United Nations and the Environment: After Three Decades of Concern, Progress is Still Slow' by Patricia Scharlin.

Volume XI Number 2 – 3 1982: This is another special double issue. It deals with the aftermath of nuclear war and its effect upon certain aspects of human existence.

Volume XI Number 4 1982: Again there is a focus upon energy planning in developing countries. But, for me, the most significant article in this issue is one that summarizes the message I took from the Mooi River Conference at Treverton. It is entitled 'Increasing Awareness of the Supranatural Nature of Emerging Environmental Issues' by Norman and Dorothy Myers.

D.V. Witt

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Stockholm, Sweden. – Eds.

ECKHOLM, ERIK P. DOWN TO EARTH: ENVIRONMENT AND HUMAN NEEDS.

Published by Pluto Press (London) under the auspices of the International Institute for Environment and Development at the invitation of UNEP, 1982.

238 pp. R7,50 (pbk)

ISBN 0-86104-381-2

This book has been published at the invitation of the director-general of UNEP as an unofficial commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the existence of that body. It is in essence an updating of Ward and Dubos' classic *Only One Earth* (1972) (which formed a major working document of the Stockholm Conference) and Ward's 1979 *Progress for a Small Planet*.

The major theme running through the book is the quality (or more often non-quality) of life of the human population closely linked to economic development and the physical resources required to sustain it. The book is divided into the three parts. Part 1 begins with an analysis of the life circumstances of what is termed the 'global underclass' and leads on to a logical and dispassionate examination of the question of world population growth and human health in relation to the physical environment.

The second part deals with the major environmental problems facing mankind on a global, regional and local level. These range from overfishing, acid rain and the critical issue of deforestation to the world loss of life-sustaining soil, world deterioration of croplands and the importance of biological diversity. All these and other issues are examined in terms of economic development and the future welfare of humankind. In the final part, appropriately entitled 'The conservation of humanity', the author suggests some realistic approaches to the possible solution of our growing environmental problems, including poverty.

Although this is not a pleasant book to read, it does not have a doomsday tone. It is a realistic appraisal of man's position vis-a-vis his environment in the early eighties. The issues of greed on the one hand and thoughtless traditions on the other are dealt with, without any hint of a 'holier than thou' tone. No pretence is made that there are any simple or sweeping solutions but indications are given to known dangers ahead, if the world's governments and individuals do not act soon.

This book should be read by all educators, from pre-primary to tertiary level, by businessmen and by all politicians of whatever persuasion. Even if they ever only read one book on the crucial topic of environmental care for the benefit of man, this should be it. No-one who reads it will be in position to say 'they didn't know.' This book is well documented with a good index for individuals wishing to follow up particular aspects in the text.

At a very reasonable price it is well within the range of those members of the public who would most benefit by reading it.

P.R.I.

HAYNES, ROBIN (Ed.) ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE METHODS

Published by Chapman & Hall, London 1982.
404 pp. R27, 85 (pbk)
ISBN 0412-23290-1

Interest in the interdependence of environmental factors and their influence on human society has grown dramatically in recent years.

This is a good introductory text for a variety of topics falling under the general ambit of the title. Topics covered range from 'general measurement', 'mathematics', 'statistics' and 'computing' to 'laboratory techniques' (such as microscopy), 'remote sensing', 'mapping', 'surveying' and 'social surveys'. There is a useful concluding chapter on 'project evaluation'.

In general the language is clear and unambiguous and concepts are logically developed. However, as may be expected in an introductory publication of this nature, there is a variation in both the overall quality and usefulness of contributions (there are fifteen authors involved). Some topics, for example mathematics and statistics, tend to assume some background knowledge whilst others, such as 'computing' are rather thin and add little to what for many would be general knowledge.

This book is likely to be most useful at the undergraduate level, particularly in environmental subjects and teacher education, where there might be greater emphasis on breadth rather than depth. Perhaps its greatest utility would lie in its use for the development of general environmental literacy. It will also be a useful starter for environmental educationists wishing to expand their knowledge and understanding to physical measurement and techniques relating to the environment. It is likely to be of little value to specialists in the various fields covered in the book, particularly at a price at which more specialised books are available.

P.R.I.

SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL SCIENTIFIC PROGRAMMES REPORTS NO. 61, 66 AND 76

Three relatively recent publications of the CSIR are of special interest to environmental educationists.

South African National Scientific Programme Report No. 61 (September 1982), edited by W. R. Siegfried and B.R. Davies and entitled *Conservation of Ecosystems: Theory and Practice*, represents the considered opinion of many of South Africa's finest environmental scientists as well as several top-rated international environmentalists. The 97 page document sets out, in clear readable English, exactly what ecosystems and their management are all about. Problems to be faced, possible solutions and both theoretical and practical applications of ecological genetics and biogeography are all set out in terms readily followed by the interested layman. In addition there is a selected reading list for those who wish to read further and one of the best glossaries of environmental terminology to be published in South Africa in recent years. This booklet is thoroughly recommended as priority reading for anyone interested in environmental education, irrespective of their speciality. It should also rate near the top of any reading list for politicians and decisionmakers in the business world.

Report No. 66 (December 1982), *Environmental Research Perspectives in South Africa*, is mainly of interest to physical scientists but has a section on 'Human needs, resources and the environment' which will be of more than passing interest to environmental educators as well as social scientists in general: With a focus upon the concept of the 'quality of life' research needs are outlined and current research programmes listed.

The third publication, Report No. 76 (December 1983) *A South African Perspective on Conservation Behaviour - A Programme Description*, is somewhat different in nature and concept from the other two. It addresses the issue of human behaviour in and towards the environment. Compiled by the Conservation Behaviour Working Group of the CSIR's Committee for Nature Conservation Research, the document begins by asking why, when "nature conservation is a human activity for human purposes with the natural environment as its stage", conservation researchers are "so reluctant to focus on people." While not attempting to answer this question the document is part of a programme to try and redress this situation. This is done by providing a conceptual framework within which it is envisaged and hoped that "interest in research into problems associated with the interaction between human behaviour and the natural environment" will be stimulated.

The document identifies levels and areas of research needs and activities as well as limited number of topics requiring investigation. These will be useful to anyone in the process of deciding upon a topic for research within this field. It will be particularly useful in universities, technicons and colleges of education where students are required to undertake research programmes. To assist the first-time researcher a draft bibliography of South African publications and research pertaining to conservation behaviour is included.

Finally and perhaps of most immediate concern to environmental educationists, is the appeal to all recipients of the document to contribute suggestions or general comments upon it. To quote from the document,

"Once adequate responses have been received a national workshop will be convened in order to improve and complete the framework and to identify specific research priorities. An ultimate objective is to develop selfsustaining centres of research expertise in this field at education and academic institutions and conservation agencies around the country."

P. Irwin

All three of these documents are available from: Co-operative Scientific Programmes, CSIR, Box 395, Pretoria 0001, South Africa. - Eds.