

BOOK REVIEWS—RESEÑAS DE LIBROS—RESENHAS DE LIVROS

Edited by John G. Blake

(To whom books for review should be sent)

Parque Nacional La Campana: Origen de una Reserva de la Biosfera en Chile Central.—Sergio Elórtegui Francioli & Andrés Moreira Muñoz, editors. 2002. Taller la Era, Santiago, Chile. ISBN 956-8201-00-9.

This book is an excellent effort to summarize biological, geographical and social aspects of a national park located in a region of high conservation significance in the coastal region of central Chile. Parque Nacional la Campana is located within the Mediterranean region, one of South America's diversity hotspots and a highly endangered ecosystem. The park has been a biosphere reserve since 1985, but ever since its creation in 1967 it has served as an important area for recreational, educational and scientific research activities. The goal of the book is to provide information about the park and the surrounding areas on a broad range of topics. The book is useful both for people planning to visit the park and for people interested in learning about this biologically and culturally rich region. As such, it can be viewed as an excellent park guide but its contribution goes far beyond a usual visitor's guide.

The book is logically structured with text supported by excellent graphics, beautiful designs and photographs. The first part is intended to inform people interested in visiting the park. It starts with a description of how to get to the park, brief description of the different sections that comprise the park and important information for visitors. The park is divided into three sectors, each

described with a brief explanation of available trails, maps, and attractions along with useful information for people planning a hike or a picnic day. The next section provides detailed information about landscape features, climate and local vegetation. This section could be overlooked if the intent is to spend a hiking day and enjoy the landscape, but for those who are curious and want to understand geological and vegetation patterns there is plenty of information provided in a very straightforward and clear way. This section does also include a nice collection of photographs of several trees and flowering plants useful to identify plant species.

The section on biodiversity, which include basic ecological concepts and descriptions of the park's flora and fauna, is most likely one of the best parts of this book. This section goes beyond simply describing the plant and animal species found in the region. Through colorful pages the authors describe a series of ecological interactions, ecosystem functions, and several aspects of the wonderful collection of living organisms, from lichens to birds and mammals. This section is not only useful for people interested in learning about basic ecological concepts and natural history, but also an excellent way to introduce children and adolescents to the world of the natural sciences. It provides a considerable amount of scientifically-based information without overloading pages with text and difficult technical words, although some parts may require some previous knowledge of basic biological con-

cepts. The use of beautiful photographs and very well designed graphics, however, help to describe ecological processes such as parasitism, pollination, seed dispersal and successional dynamics. In addition, some useful plates of mammal foot prints and skulls are also available.

Within the biodiversity section there is also a small chapter on flying animals, which describes some bird species that can be observed in the park. Especially useful is a plate with designs and silhouettes of major raptor species that are very likely to be observed in the area. Also, there is a part on nocturnal raptors with some description of their natural history. Other groups of birds are also described, such as the guild of seed dispersers, small insectivorous birds that inhabit areas of dense vegetation and tree climbers such as woodpeckers. The aim of this book is not to serve as a primary source for bird identification, although it may help; a proper bird guide would be more useful if one's interest is to identify birds. Nevertheless, descriptions of bird species and guilds provide interesting information framed in the context of their role within the ecosystem.

Finally, the book ends with a few sections about the historical and social context that recognizes the importance of the cultural diversity of the region. A small section describes the history of pre-hispanic inhabit-

ants and some archaeological findings that can be observed when visiting the park. The general history of the region over the past centuries is also described, with interesting stories about mining, and the extraction of syrup from an endemic palm, which is now protected in the park. Traditions and festivities of local communities that live in the vicinity of the park are also covered. The book ends with a final section about the meaning of a Biosphere Reserve and the significance of the cultural and biological diversity of the region in which Parque Nacional la Campana is found.

All in all, this is an excellent book that has a lot to contribute not only as a guide for people interested in visiting the Parque Nacional La Campana but also as a great educational tool. This book is also an excellent source of information on the natural history of central Chile flora and fauna in a format that is accessible to a general public. I certainly recommend acquiring this book; it is very well done and contains a great amount of information that seeks to motivate people of all ages to discover a biologically and culturally important region of central Chile.— Cintia Cornelius, University of Missouri-St. Louis, Department of Biology, One University Blvd., St. Louis, Missouri, USA and Fundación Senda Darwin, Casilla 81, Correo 9, Santiago, Chile.