BOOK REVIEWS

A view from the summit: The story of Bukit Timah Nature Reserve. Lum, S. & I. Sharp (Editors), 1996. Nanyang Technological University and National University of Singapore, Singapore, 141 pp. ISBN 981-00-7960-5.

The Bukit Timah forest is a 164 ha nature reserve within Singapore. It consists of about 50 ha of primary dipterocarp tropical rain forest; the rest comprise of similar but secondary forest (Chin *et al.* 1995). According to the island biogeography theory, faunal and floral extinctions on small islands such as Singapore would be higher than on neighbouring mainland areas of similar vegetation due to small relic populations coupled with low immigration rates (MacArthur & Wilson, 1967). The Bukit Timah nature reserve is of considerable interest scientifically because it has been isolated from other primary forests since at least 150 years ago (Corlett, 1990). As the theory goes, the reserve has a far greater threat of species extinctions because of being an "island" within an island. The Bukit Timah nature reserve already has lost many of its flora and fauna. For instance, 26%, 28%, and 44% of its vascular plant flora, resident bird fauna, freshwater fishes, respectively have already gone extinct (Turner & Corlett, 1996). However, now the reserve serves as an excellent field experiment for "ex-situ" conservation to determine if it can sustain its current flora and fauna over an imaginable future. Of being in one of the densest populated areas on this planet, this reserve can serve as a vital bridge between conservation and education.

This book attempts to be different than previously published accounts on the reserve as it targets both the general public and academics. There are diverse topics covered in this book. There are four chapters on the history, biodiversity, evolutionary ecology, and conservation and management of the reserve. Other small write-ups include on ferns, mycology, palms, seed dispersal, aquatic life, insects, trilobite larvae, amphibians and reptiles, birds, mammals, and macaques. The book also has a number short nostalgic or personal notes. In general, the book is well produced and written considering that 18 contributors were involved. I think that it has succeeded in its objective as it will serve both general public and researchers alike. For example, for a researcher, this book gives critical but often hard to obtain information about the history of the reserve, and an introduction to flora and fauna of the reserve.

There are, however, a number of irritations in the book. First, some of the short write-ups are inserted within chapters thus breaking the flow of the chapters. Second, a number of typological errors remain in the book. Last, for some flora and fauna scientific names are mentioned in legends of photographs while for others they are not. Despite these minor irritations, I have no hesitation in recommending this book to anybody who is interested in natural areas.

LITERATURE CITED

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MacArthur, R. H. & E. O. Wilson, 1967. *The theory of island biogeography*. Princeton University Press, Princeton. 203 pp.

Turner, I. M. & R. T. Corlett, 1996. The conservation value of small, isolated fragments of lowland tropical rain forest. *Trends Ecol. Evol.* **11:** 330-33.

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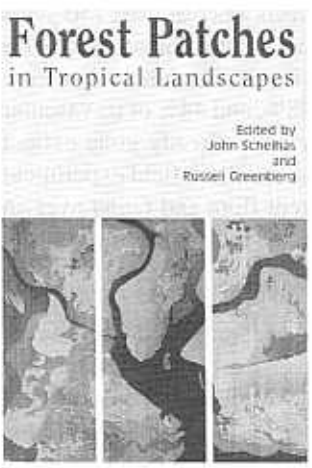

Forest Patches in Tropical Landscapes. Schelhas, J., & Greenberg, R., (Eds). 1996. Island Press, Washington, D.C., xxxvi + 426 pp. ISBN 1 55963 425 1 (cloth); ISBN 1 55963 426 x (paper).

Less than a lifetime ago Southeast Asia was covered with apparently limitless forests. Today, except for New Guinea and perhaps Borneo, the only extensive forests are located in National Parks. Outside the parks, agriculture dominates the landscape. But set amid the sea of crops are small islands of forest. These contain the relics of the forest plant and animal community and are vital for maintaining the biodiversity of many areas of Southeast Asia, and other regions of the tropics.

This is the first book to investigate the ecological importance of forest patches in tropical landscapes and to analyze the options available for managing them sustainably and for the conservation of biodiversity. The book arose out of the involvement of Schelhas and Greenberg in a project concerning the importance of tropical forest patches for overwintering North American migrant birds. It contains nineteen papers which cover the fields of ecology, conservation biology, forestry and social anthropology. Birds are not noticeably pushed to the fore, but few papers concern areas outside South or Central America. The only papers with direct reference to the Asian tropics are Pinedo-Vazquez and Padoch on traditional forest-use and agricultural systems of Dayaks in Kalimantan and Poffenberger on the move to community-based forest management by tribals in parts of Eastern India.

The book can be divided into two roughly equal portions. The first eleven papers are mostly ecological in outlook. They provide, or review, data to show that forest patches support many species. The second half of the book focuses on forest use and management. The