

impression that only those traditions 'uncontaminated' by contact with Western culture are relevant to the question at hand, since his account relies almost exclusively upon the earliest non-Native ethnographic sources.

In conclusion, then, is Harrod successful in achieving his goal? The answer is — yes and no. For while his comparative ethnography provides an excellent source for those who would like to pursue the question of 'reimagining our relationships with the natural world', they will have to look to someone other than Harrod for realistic ecological inspiration, and for a discussion of the links between Native American philosophy and the development of ecological philosophy over the past century.

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CONSERVATION BIOLOGY OF CETACEANS IN MARINE COMMUNITIES OF BAJA CALIFORNIA: SCIENCE OR ADVOCACY?

Dedina, S. (2000) *Saving the gray whale: People, politics, and conservation in Baja, California*. University of Arizona Press, Tucson, AZ. xxix + 186 pp, tables, maps, colour photographs. Hardback: Price US\$37.50, ISBN 0-8165-1845-9. Paperback: Price US\$17.95, ISBN 0-8165-1846-7.

Saving the gray whale is a compelling example of an intricate functional relationship between resource users, environmentalists, and govern-

ment regulators. The book, which includes eight chapters on topics ranging from natural history to Mexican politics and fishing communities in Baja, California, includes a first-hand account of the human dimension of gray whale conservation in Mexico. While many scientists fall short in considering the human component of ecological systems, Dedina uses colourful language to paint a vivid picture of the cultural association between people and gray whales, both historically and at present. Unfortunately, the author's emotive language calls into question the legitimacy of the information presented. For example, Dedina describes the history of human exploitation of gray whales as 'the slaughter of so many gray whales throughout their migratory route and the recklessness of killing mothers and calves ... was never a concern to an industry focused on maximizing profits for investors' (p. 23). Furthermore, Dedina does not seem to distinguish threats imposed on gray whales during 19th century whaling activities from modern threats imposed by U.S. tribes, and alludes to the 'hypocrisy of American environmental groups pointing the finger over the San Ignacio Lagoon saltworks while the U.S. government sanctions the killing of gray whales by the Makah Indians' (p. 149). Clearly, the threat of degrading habitats in critical breeding areas for an entire species is a more substantial risk to gray whales as compared to the possibility of removing a maximum of 500 animals per year from a population of 26 000. As a scientist I do not have the background to comment on the social and historical information presented in this book, but the misrepresentation of gray whale conservation in the U.S. magnified my scepticism about this book. For example, the author asserts that the decision to remove gray whales from the list of Threatened and Endangered Wildlife was premature. In fact, the decision to delist gray whales was based on 19 years of abundance estimates indicating that the population had exceeded its pre-exploitation population size (Gerber *et al.*, 1999). The author also confuses U.S. agencies and researchers, referring to the 'U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Marine Mammal Laboratory (NMML) in Seattle' (p. 51) — in fact, NMML is a Federal agency under the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration and has nothing to do with the Fish and Wildlife Service. This suggests

a lack of rigour in reviewing the institutional framework governing gray whale conservation in the U.S. Taking my scepticism aside, I enjoyed several parts of this book. Dedina accurately identifies a critical problem in conservation biology: the lack of explicit guidelines for assessing risk to species, 'because gray whales are so visible, these cetaceans receive considerably more attention than other more threatened and endangered animals such as sea turtles, pronghorn antelope, and bighorn sheep' (p. 29). Yet, despite the public appeal of such charismatic megafauna, it was striking to learn that there has historically been a profound lack of infrastructure for retaining knowledge derived from studies carried out by foreign investigators in Mexico: 'if any foreign naturalists have gone through the peninsula and made studies over particular species, they are only known in the United States and France, where

they were probably published.' (p. 43). While I applaud the author's efforts to bring people and politics to the forefront of gray whale conservation in Baja, California, this book falls short of providing a credible reference about the conservation status of this once endangered but now recovered marine mammal.

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