

PERRINGS (CHARLES), MÄLER (KARL-GORAN) and FOLKE (CARL), (Eds). *Biodiversity Loss: Economic and Ecological Issues*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995. Pp. xiv + 332. £35.00 hardback, US \$54.95 hardback. ISBN 0 521 47178 8.

Under the auspices of the Beijer Institute, 20 academics working on ecological and economic interactions are here brought together. However, this attempt at combining perspectives is of limited success due to a considerable lack of cross-fertilisation of ideas. This is apparent from an economist's abstract statistical description of diversity, in ch. 1, bearing little on following discussions, through to Mäler's presentation of work familiar from the 1970s which neglects to even mention biodiversity. A more rewarding approach would have been to use the excellent review of the ecologists' perspective by Holling and associates to direct and shape contributions. Rather than economic analysis of Holling's points there is unnecessary repetition (e.g. figure 3.14). Elsewhere mathematical modelling dominates and on occasion seems to have replaced the need to communicate with words, e.g. 19 pages of largely unexplained simulation diagrams (pp.

171-89). The majority of economic content is best described as neoclassical calculus, showing how resource models can be adapted to include some ecological considerations. As the valuation of ecosystem resilience is the single most important research problem in ecological economics (p. 307) the lack of content and coherence on the topic is disappointing. Partha Dasgupta's foreword states that utilitarian, aesthetic, and intrinsic values are relevant, although without explanation. A contrived and unconvincing attempt is made in the introduction to distinguish private and social value by ecosystem structure, while (p. 6) non-use value is both included in and excluded from private value. Turner *et al.*, in the only chapter explicitly concerned with valuation techniques, regard debates concerning intrinsic value as sterile (p. 134) preferring 'non-preference based instrumental value'. This bewildering value concept seems irrelevant when three case studies are presented employing human preference via market priced replacement costs and contingent variation. Swanson's contribution, a précis of his book (see review in the *ECONOMIC JOURNAL*, September 1995), presents yet another alternative on biodiversity valuation. Strangely, the conclusion directs attention to pertinent questions concerning ecosystem resilience, biodiversity valuation and intergenerational, and intragenerational ethics; yet the strength of this book is in perturbing natural resource models whose success is founded upon excluding such questions.

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