

Book Reviews

Crimes Against Nature: Environmental Criminology and Ecological Justice.

Rob White

Willan Publishing, Devon, 2008, 313 pp, price \$59.95

Crimes Against Nature claims to be the first comprehensive book to cover the emerging field of green or environmental criminology. The author has contributed to existing literature on this topic, as other texts are generally confined to environmental law, or are collections of essays on specific topics. Rob White's stated aim is to consider the 'key concerns, concepts and conundrums of environmental criminology'. White largely achieves this aim by exploring contentious issues in relation to environmental criminology and suggesting potential research areas. In doing so, he draws not only on criminological discourse, but also diverse academic fields such as law, sociology, politics, science and environmental studies.

Although White is clearly passionate about the importance of addressing environmental harm and the devastating effects of environmental crime, he maintains a measure of professionalism and abstains from devolving into a political diatribe in *Crimes Against Nature*. White's focus is primarily on the international arena, reflecting the global nature of environmental harm and crime. *Crimes Against Nature* will be of some use to environmentalists, politicians, environmental policy makers and students of criminology or environmental studies, especially given the current public interest in environmental damage and associated criminalisation.

Given the breadth which it purports to cover, the book is surprisingly clear and concise, making it accessible for those without much in-depth knowledge in the field of criminology and environmental law. However, this does not appear to have impacted upon the quality or thoroughness of the research. Complicated notions such as the application of conventional criminological concepts to environmental damage have been carefully thought out and explained clearly. White also delves into current criminological responses to issues surrounding environmental damage and assesses the effectiveness of current responses. He also considers the impact of international politics on this key area.

The book is divided into three parts. Part I covers 'Green Theoretical Perspectives' including a discussion of the relationship between criminology and environmental harm, social constructions of

environmental problems and environmental risk. White also discusses the precautionary principle, which concerns minimising environmental risks that currently exist and also those that may exist in the future. Part II covers 'Environmental Crime' and in this section, White evaluates the dimensions of environmental crime, transitional environmental crime and more generally, the expansive concept of environmental harm. In the final part, 'Responding to Environmental Harm', White explores environmental aspects of law enforcement, regulation, crime prevention, and socio-legal intervention.

Given that White's discussion hinges on the framework of green criminology, it is important to be aware of the conventional conceptualisations of harm and criminality before the relationship with environmental crime can be fully appreciated. In the first chapter, White explains eco-philosophy and how it defines environmental harm. He examines three well-established approaches to environmental criminology: environmental justice, ecological justice and species justice. White's view is that environmental degradation has serious social and global ramifications, and this is shared for many academics and experts in the field. However, White takes the concept of environmental harm out of the purely scientific or political fields by emphasising that the resolution of the problem requires identifying whose interests would be affected by such degradation. His underlying philosophy is that there is a need for action, both in an academic and a practical manner. The point being, that it will take a compilation of legal practice, academic research, environmental activism and concerned citizens to bring about significant reform in this area.

White's view is that taking a specifically ideological or one-sided stance on environmental crime can be counter-productive to the ultimate aim of ensuring environmental protection. One of the risks associated with taking a bio-centric view on this area is that tensions can be raised between environmental issues and the rights of individuals. White makes the point that the position taken on this issue will directly affect the regulatory regimes developed and utilised.

Each of the chapters can be read in isolation (with the exception of chapter one). This aids readers specifically interested in a particular aspect of environmental crime. White has also included case studies and figures within the text to expand on the information already provided. Figures provide the reader with concise definitions of terms and concepts used in the relevant areas, and case studies provide real-life examples that illustrate the case in point. For example, the three case studies on pages 242-243 show how aquaculture, recreational fishing in contaminated areas, and overfishing can cause different types of environmental harm. This highlights the overarching necessity for environmental crime

prevention, while reinforcing White's proposition that approaches need to be tailored to suit the problems they are meant to rectify.

Concluding each chapter with the question 'where to from here?' suggests that the issue of environmental criminology and criminology in general is open-ended and will continue to evolve with further study and research. White takes the useful step of making practical suggestions as to areas in which further research should be undertaken. While this book is not a political battle cry, it is a challenge laid down to criminologists to engage with the pressing issues of environmental harm and ecological justice.

*Jennifer Sallans**

Looking South: Australia's Antarctic Agenda

Lorne Kriwoken, Julia Jabour and Allan Hemmings (eds)
The Federation Press, 2007, pp 227, \$49.95

Looking South presents a broad spectrum of articles on Antarctica, covering a variety of topics within Antarctic studies. It seeks to portray a snapshot of Australia's policy towards the frozen continent by sourcing articles from a diverse range of authors from various academic and professional backgrounds. The diversity of subject matter covered, coupled with the breadth of academic disciplines in which the many authors specialise, renders the work slightly cumbersome. However, the editors must be commended for taking these works and combining them with a common style, which greatly reduces the unwieldy and erratic feeling the work would have possessed had the contributions been reproduced in their original form.

Almost any subject regarding Australia's involvement with the Antarctic one could wish to examine is covered within *Looking South*. The work encompasses the past, present and future directions of Australia's Antarctic policy. *Looking South* considers not only the Antarctic in isolation, but also provides an insight into Antarctica's position in a world

* Third year LLB, University of Tasmania and a member of the University of Tasmania Law Review Board since 2007.