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# Review

Newell, Josh, ed. *The Russian Far East: A Reference Guide for Conservation and Development*, 2nd ed. McKinleyville, CA: Daniel & Daniel, Publishers, 2004. 466 p. + xx. Cloth \$99.95; paper \$59.95.

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**T**he *Russian Far East: A Reference Guide for Conservation and Development* represents a significant contribution to contemporary understanding of this remote, but nonetheless important, corner of our increasingly interconnected planet. This volume represents an extensive revision of the first edition, which carried a different subtitle (*Forests, Biodiversity Hotspots, and Industrial Developments*; Newell and Wilson, 1996). The emphasis in the present volume remains on the interplay of economy and environment, but also includes recurring subthemes on such topics as indigenous peoples and legal issues. Historical perspectives and political issues receive lesser treatment (for example, the contentious issue of the southern Kurile Islands receives only one sentence on page 379). In many respects, it is a solid and impressive successor to the now outdated volume on the Soviet Far East by Rodgers (1990), and will serve as an invaluable compliment to other recent scholarly works on the history and economics of the region (e.g., Bassin, 1999; Thornton and Ziegler, 2002).

I am always impressed with books that do what they say they're going to do, and even more so when they do it well. These criteria are skillfully met in Newell's *The Russian Far East*. Both the book's subtitle and its introduction make it clear that this work was not written to be a text, but rather is intended to serve as an extensive reference work for researchers and other readers interested in this key portion of the Russian Federation. Throughout its fact-filled 466 pages, it remains true to this mission. In format and content it may truly be termed encyclopedic, in both senses of the term.

The volume is organized primarily in a regional format. A lengthy introductory ("Overview") chapter is followed by ten regional chapters, each devoted to one of the political jurisdictions (oblasts, krays, and autonomous regions) that comprise the Russian Far East. The sections of these chapters are authored by specialists, mostly Russian, whose backgrounds are identified in the preface. Indeed, one of the strengths of the work is its reliance on Russian specialists to provide most of the text; of the 90 contributors, the vast majority are Russian.

The format of the regional chapters has been standardized. Each chapter consists of several topical subsections, with an opening introductory section giving a geographic and economic overview of the region. The topical subsections include descriptive material of varying length on "Ecology," "Biodiversity hotspots," "Economy," "Toward sustainable development," "Indigenous peoples," "Legal issues," and "Perspective." Each of the 10 regional chapters includes a concise sidebar summary of the "Key issues and projects" that characterize that particular region.

The primary focus of the work, as the subsection titles would suggest, is on the protection of the region's outstanding biodiversity. This is Newell's primary interest, and is

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supported by much past research that documents the biological importance of this region (e.g., Pryde, 1987; Strand, 1995). Readers with a similar interest will find this book especially valuable.

The chapters are enhanced by numerous maps, photos, and tables; the photos in particular are remarkable, being of much better quality than is typically found in this type of volume. The maps are cartographically sophisticated and contain a wealth of information (although, curiously, neither map of the Kurile Islands [pp. 21 and p. 374] provide names for any of the specific islands, despite their geopolitical importance).

Newell's introductory ("Overview") chapter is by far the longest (over 100 pages). It is intended to convey summary background information on the entire Russian Far East region. Included within it are 16 full color pages of maps and photos, and its contents are supported by no less than 332 endnotes. It contains a wealth of substantive information which, while of great reference value, would have been much easier to navigate had its various subsections been specifically identified and paginated in the Table of Contents.

Given the vast amount of information in the volume, relatively few errata were observed, and most were minor. For example, on page 266 the photo caption should identify the bird shown as a Common eider (*Obyknovennaya gaga*), not "Pacific eider." In the "Ecology" section of the Overview chapter, the statement on page 37 that Murav'yovka Park "is currently managed by the SEU" should state that the SEU (Socio-Ecological Union) holds lease title to the property, but does not manage it. The remarkable and visionary Murav'yovka Park, reported on earlier in this journal (Pryde, 1999), might have merited a separate sidebar. The relatively few minor misstatements encountered, of the type that creep into any volume, suggest that the huge amount of substantive information in the work is overall quite accurate and reliable.

A larger problem, though, relates to the use of the volume by researchers who wish to pursue some of the sources cited. Neither a comprehensive Bibliography for the entire volume, nor chapter bibliographies, are provided—only a "Notes" (endnotes) section that refers to in-text citations. Thus, some references encountered in the text (as an example, "Darman, 2000" at Tables 5.1 and 5.2) become an unknown reference, as no citation of a "Darman, 2000" appears among the 84 endnotes to Chapter 5 (pp. 438-439), and there is no overall Bibliography. If Darman and similar references are cited in some other chapter, this will be lost to all but the most compulsive endnote readers.

This reviewer would like to see works on the Russian Far East (all of them, not just this one) devote more space to noting both the historic and current interactions between the Russian Far East and North America, particularly Alaska. Too often, the world seems to end at Cape Dezhnev, with little note being made of the continuity of geomorphology, peoples, and history across the Bering Strait.

Newell's volume is mixed in this regard. His color maps on pp. 14 and 15 show Alaska, but those on pp. 19 and 282 show the Bering Sea extending for hundreds of kilometers eastward into seeming *mare incognito*. Both maps have the place name "Bering Sea" positioned in part directly across Alaska's St. Lawrence Island. And although the Yupik people have long inhabited both sides of the Bering Strait (and indeed crossed over from St. Lawrence Island to visit Siberian relatives even during the Cold War), the only mention of "Yupik Eskimos" is in an unelaborated list of the various indigenous groups living in Chukotka. In a similar vein, Japan is missing from the maps of the Kurile Islands on pp. 21 and 374, even though it is only a few kilometers away.

Newell does note, however, the unsuccessful efforts in the 1990s to create a joint U.S.–Russian International Park across the Bering Strait, efforts that can hopefully be resurrected

in the future. He also provides a little information on the extensive U.S.–Russian efforts to rationalize fish and marine mammal extraction from North Pacific and Arctic waters. On the other hand, despite the book's emphasis on natural resources and biodiversity, there is only one brief mention of the important multilateral CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) Treaty, a major weapon in the fight to preserve biodiversity.

Although the latter observations may be dismissed as the predilections of a specialist, the larger point is that Russia, long one of the great xenophobic nations of the world, needs to be encouraged to interact in a more cooperative manner with other nations. This is especially important in the areas of natural resource extraction and use, in order to work toward a sustainable future for all of Earth's inhabitants. This will be a major future challenge for both the Russian Federation and the United States, and the Russian Far East serves as an important Asiatic anchor for the metaphorical arch of such international cooperation that increasingly spans the Pacific Ocean. Newell's significant contribution to our understanding of this important region will help increase intelligent interaction on both sides of the Pacific.

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