

Lenarčič, M. & J. Bizjak (eds.) 2009. *The Alps. A Bird's Eye View*. PanAlp, 512 pages.
[ISBN-10: 978-961-6111-19-5]

The arc of the Alps provides limitless scope for glorious sights and in this large-format book Matevž Lenarčič has captured a great number of them beautifully. The dazzling pictures, however, should not distract from the fact that this book project has also brought together more than a dozen major figures in all things alpine. Their skilfully illustrated articles cover biotic and abiotic aspects of the Alps as well as regional development themes, especially in alpine tourism. In his preface, famous mountaineer Christian Bonington presents changing views on the ethics of climbing. Cultural aspects are brought in by Hans Haid in a text on the myths of avalanches and by Roland Dellagiacomia, who writes on the wines of the Southern Alps.

The book is in English, presumably to reach audiences across all alpine countries and beyond. With the exception of Bonington, however, none of the authors are English native speakers and, sadly, the quality of the translations does not match the quality of the photographs, which are reproduced with exceptional care and to great effect.

It must have been very difficult to select the pictures to include in this book. In the end, the editors decided to present the beauty and grandeur of the Alps, but it would have been good to include a few reminders of detrimental effects, not least because these are referred to in the texts. The section on the Southern Alps includes pictures of cultural landscapes, while these are completely missing from the section on the Western Alps, giving the misleading impression that this part of the Alps consists entirely of "majestic" natural landscapes. The subdivision into Eastern, Western, Central and Southern Alps is altogether problematic and not in line with the use of these terms in scientific writing. The overall boundaries of the Alps are drawn arbitrarily and, within each section, the photographs are arranged for maximum visual impact at the expense of a coherent spatial or thematic order.

The captions, too, could have done with more attention to detail. In their form they are inconsistent, some captions are vague – it would have been good to know that the Schafberg (not Schaffberg) is in the Upper-Austrian Salzkammergut. Others are imprecise or downright incorrect (as in the case of the earth pyramids, also known as hoodoos, which are not sandstone but moraine material).

More disciplined editing and a more thought-out structure would have served Matevž Lenarčič' imposing photographs – and the readers – better. As it stands, it invites the reader to marvel at the photographs and read up on individual aspects, but fails to create an overall image of the largest European mountain area.

Brigitte Scott and Oliver Bender

Chape, S., M. Spalding & M. Jenkins 2008: *The World's Protected Areas. Status, Values and Prospects in the 21st Century*. London: University of California Press.
[ISBN: 978-052-0246-60-7]

This is the book that everyone who is working in and on protected areas has been waiting for. It provides a global overview of our theme. The editors, supported by the United Nations Environmental Programme and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, have created an informative volume (with longer texts and text boxes), well documented with maps and tables, and at the same time a book with fascinating images that invite the reader to experience the variety of protected areas across the globe.

The first chapter deals with history, definitions and the global perspective and includes a section on the special case of Antarctica. The ensuing chapters present the concept of biodiversity and the habitats as well as discussing threats to protected areas.

The success of the protection concept is dependent on the sponsors and the management and governance structures at each site. These are dealt with in further chapters, with a separate section on the special case of international waters and the marine environment. The volume also contains a discussion of perspectives for protected areas in the 21st century and presents fifteen large areas across the world in the regional chapters, focussing on assessment and a review of major issues and prospects.

Such an approach, based on the regionalization of the world by the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas, slightly obscures the view of the various habitat regions. Here you will not find a comparison of protected mountain areas; instead, the large regions are dealt with in terms of climatic and political aspects. You can, of course, read the massive volume (359 pages) selectively and in this way pick out montane environments, facilitated by the extensive index at the back of the book.

The concise, comprehensive and very informative presentations in this book complement the sober World Data Base on Protected Areas (WDPA) and offer anyone interested in protected areas an overview of thousands of nature reserves, national parks, protected landscapes and other forms of designated conservation areas. Thanks are due to the editors and authors for this achievement as well as for the presentation, the layout and the careful editing of this volume. This book will remain the basis and starting point for scientific work on protected areas for years to come.

Axel Borsdorf