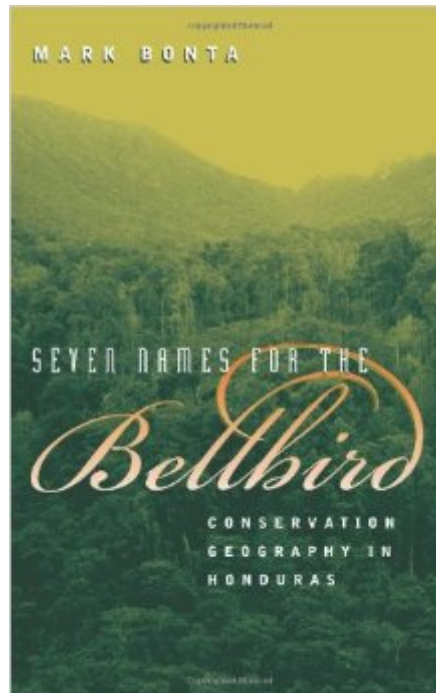


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Seven Names For The Bellbird: Conservation Geography In Honduras



Synopsis

Offering intimate and unforgettable descriptions of the birds and people that inhabit Honduran landscapes, *Seven Names for the Bellbird* showcases the deep-rooted local traditions of bird appreciation and holds them up as a model for sound management of the environment. Through his appreciative recounting of local lore, author Mark Bonta makes the interaction between culture and avifauna in Latin America a key to better understanding the practice of biodiversity protection. He makes a significant contribution to the scarce anthropological and geographical literature on human-environment relationships in Central America and also provides wonderful stories of native birds and their human observers. After a decade in the field in Honduras, Mark Bonta came to realize that, contrary to outsiders' general beliefs, the society he observed was predisposed to like birds, to observe birds, to weave them into folklore, and to protect them on private property. Bonta argues that if North Americans and Europeans paid real attention to local knowledge and practice; instead of condemning them out-of-hand and imposing new beliefs and techniques; they would learn that rural cultures offer alternative ways of accommodating habitats and wildlife. Bonta uses the concept of 'conservation geography'—the study of human beings and their landscapes, with natural resource conservation in the forefront—to advance his argument. He describes many cases where local individuals and their traditional knowledge of birds contribute to a de facto variety of bird conservation that precedes or parallels 'official' bird protection efforts. This book is not offered as 'proof' that all birds have happy futures in the Neotropics. Bonta recognizes the ravages of both human pressures and natural disasters on the birds and forests. But he shows that in many instances, birds are safe and even thrive in the presence of local people, who 'celebrate' them just as often as they persecute them.

Book Information

Hardcover: 250 pages

Publisher: Texas A&M University Press; 1 edition (June 17, 2003)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1585442496

ISBN-13: 978-1585442492

Product Dimensions: 6.3 x 1 x 9.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars — See all reviews (4 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #3,005,008 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #65 in Books > History > Americas > Central America > Honduras #4652 in Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Animals > Birds & Birdwatching #5925 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Human Geography

Customer Reviews

Seven Names for the Bellbird goes beyond typical discussions of environmental problems in Latin America to show how real people and real birds interact in their shared landscapes. The wealth of details in Bonta's discussion makes a significant contribution to the study of human-animal interactions. Easily accessible and yet provocative, Bonta shows how conservation activities need to be based on local practices and control of resources--a lesson not just for environmentalists working in developing countries, but good advice for people working to protect their own neighborhoods.

(From Planeta.com) -- Kudos to author Mark Bonta and to Texas A&M Press for publishing Seven Names for the Bellbird, one of the best books of the year. Few books document the challenges and merits of including locals in conservation. Bonta, a university professor and former member of the U.S. Peace Corps provides a frank account of biodiversity conservation and birding in of the most mountainous regions of the Americas. The beautifully written narrative is complimented by maps and photos. Excellent!

I too was a Peace Corps volunteer (99-01) working in Sierra de Agalta National Park and its surrounding communities. Mark's book wonderfully captures the "ornithophilia" of Olanchanos, and puts together a strong case for conservation at local scales that build upon existing needs and environmental concerns. A must have for all conservationists working in Honduras or anywhere else for that matter.

Kudos to the author for writing this book - very few books written specifically about Honduras. Honduras has much more national park than Costa Rica (who does a GREAT job marketing that they're a "natural" country) but gets very little attention. Anyone who's hiked Sierra de Agalta or camped in La Muralla knows what a breathtaking country Honduras is. Kudos for writing this book.

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