

NAFANUA. Saving the Samoan Rain Forest. By Paul Alan Cox (U.S. National Tropical Botanical Garden). W.H. Freeman and Company, New York, NY. 1999. 238 pp. 14.5 × 23 cm. \$14.95 (paperback). ISBN 0-7167-3563-6.

Paul Cox's account of his work as an environmentalist and ethnobotanist in Samoa will be of interest to anyone concerned with conserving biodiversity and its myriad products. His approach to conservation has valuable lessons to both scientists and environmentalists that work in the tropics. Cox works effectively on local, national, and international levels, from single villages in Samoa to governments and businesses in the United States and Europe.

As the title suggests, the primary emphasis of the book is conservation of rain forests in Samoa. Cox describes how a village was ordered by the Samoan government to pay \$65,000 for the construction of a new elementary school. Remarkably, the order was followed by a \$65,000 offer to log the region's only remaining primary forest. Forced to choose between their children's education and the forest, the villagers reluctantly agreed to let the logging begin, the description of which is gut-wrenching. Cox ultimately raised the money for the school, with help from scientists and businessmen worldwide. At the same time, he worked with the village chiefs to draft a covenant to protect the forest. Cox's success in such endeavors is directly tied to his deep appreciation and understanding of the Samoan culture and language.

He used a different strategy to promote conservation in American Samoa, a territory of the United States. He took advantage of its territorial status to lobby U.S. politicians for the creation of a U.S. National Park, no small feat during the Reagan administration. To protect the endangered Samoan flying fox from commercial hunters, he worked to halt trade in the species by having it listed on

the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species ("CITES"). When the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service resisted his efforts, he turned to a Swedish colleague, whose government submitted the proposal. The proposal was adopted and commercial traffic in the species was halted.

I compared Cox's book with another recent publication, "Requiem for Nature", by ecologist John Terborgh. He describes how poverty, corruption, institutional weakness, political instability, and exploitation have combined to destroy tropical habitats. Without profound changes, he argues that the same fate will befall the developing world's remaining forests. Terborgh believes that an "internationalization" of nature protection is perhaps the best way to conserve biodiversity, combined with the strengthening of the institutions that protect nature in developing countries.

While Terborgh's proposals may indeed be the best long-term solution to deforestation in the developing world, in many areas they will be difficult to implement soon enough to be relevant to conservation. Cox's work in Samoa demonstrates how much an individual scientist can accomplish when he or she works in a way that recognizes local customs and realities and applies the resources of a global network of colleagues from science, business, and government.

The book is eminently readable but occasionally lapses into the overly dramatic. But anyone making an impact on conservation like Paul Cox is entitled to a little excess.

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