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BOOK REVIEW

Peter A. Coates, American Perceptions of Immigrant and Invasive Species. Strangers on the Land

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Coates, an English historian, has filled a gap in the biological and historical literature on biological invasions. Focusing on how introduced species in the United States and the people who support or decry them have been perceived, he weaves a rich, complicated tapestry that will delight and inform any invasion biologist. In particular, his treatment of the relationship between perceptions of introduced species and perceptions of human immigrants is magisterial.

Coates's two main examples are the English sparrow and eucalyptus trees, but his descriptions of the invasion histories and controversies surrounding many other species of plants and animals are informative and often enriched by arcane, delightful facts about those who introduced them, spread them, and inveighed against them.

The circumstances of the sparrow invasion are legendary, and, though its presence in North America is generally deplored, even as its numbers have waned somewhat, the venom associated with its invasion is jarring: William Dawson called it ‘‘the most deplorable event in the history of American ornithology,’’ and a popular song of 1883 was ‘‘The Sparrow Must Go.’’ Invasion aficionados who have explored the hostility to the sparrow have generally not posited a displaced xenophobia, largely because the sparrow is English and many of its most vocal opponents were of English origin. This contrasts with, for example, opposition to the Hessian fly (cf. Pauly 2002). Coates shows that, in fact, anti-sparrow sentiment coincided with clashes of interest between Great Britain and its former colony, and that some who deprecated the bird emphasized its heritage. A *Washington Post* article of 1893 noted that the sparrow's behavior in the U.S. ‘‘very much resembles that of the human members of that all-conquering nation.’’ More often, the bird was analogized to other groups of immigrants or to immigrants generally. One critic claimed that, ‘‘As the ‘yellow peril’ is to human immigration, so is this sparrow to other birds.’’ The hapless sparrow was detested as an avian version of unappreciated slum dwellers (Italians and eastern European Jews), and when it spread to the countryside it was deplored for taking the best areas from native swallows. The sparrow had its American defenders as well, most dramatically the poet George Horton, who penned ‘‘To an English Sparrow.’’ Tracing a history of nativism in the United States, culminating in the immigration restrictions of the early 20th century, and the roughly contemporaneous controversy over the sparrow and other introduced species, Coates shows linkages and frequent use of

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suggestive metaphors in both movements, but he ultimately feels that the motivation of scientists aligned against the bird, and against other invaders such as the starling, was not primarily displaced jingoism.

As for eucalyptus, in California it aroused even more passionate detractors and advocates than the sparrow had on the East Coast, and Coates describes the early enthusiasm (especially in the service of reforestation), the rise of eucalyptus to iconic status in California (e.g., the eucalyptus school of art that flourished in the early 20th century), and the subsequent reaction. Particularly interesting is his detailed description of the controversy that raged over removal of eucalypts from Angel Island.

A long section on plants and plant pests that arrived in the late 19th and early 20th centuries—gypsy moth, Japanese beetle, European corn borer, and many others—similarly traces the cross-references to human immigration. Again, Coates suggests that public responses to invading weeds, insects, and pathogens bore some relationship to concerns about human immigration, though he points to real dangers posed by many of these species. Among scientists, the general battle lines were between botanists, such as David G. Fairchild, who often scoured the earth for new species and advocated liberal introduction laws, and entomologists such as Leland O. Howard and Charles L. Marlatt, who foresaw the subsequently realized dangers that hitchhikers on introduced plants posed, and sometimes the problems that the plants themselves might cause. While presenting a more nuanced view of the entomologists than Pauly (1996), and not charging the entomologists directly with nativism, Coates does not give them much credit for the prescience of their views on potential damage to native species and agriculture. As for the late 20th century spate of charges by people like the gardening writer Michael Pollan, biologist Banu Subramaniam, and landscape architects Gert Gröning and Joachim Woschke-Bulmahn that invasion biology is displaced xenophobia and lineally descended from the native plant-loving Nazis (see Simberloff 2003), Coates dismisses it entirely as very strained, even paranoid. To some extent, the concern is fed by the frequent use of martial and human metaphors to describe invasions, a matter that has recently drawn attention from invasion biologists (e.g., Larson 2005; Simberloff 2006). Coates takes a somewhat different view of the role of metaphor in this context, contending that many invasion biology metaphors are ''wilted metaphors,'' metaphors that have become so trite as to lose their metaphoric function.

Any invasion biologist will enjoy reading *American Perceptions* and learn much from it. Surely most will turn to it again and again for anecdotes, quotes, and interesting facts to enliven papers and talks. One of the most engaging features is the parade of players, often notorious, who cross its pages: Martin Dies, Madison Grant, Henry Fairfield Osborn, etc. Many lesser lights are equally fascinating. Charles. M. Goethe was a founding board member of the Sierra Club, major figure in the Save-the-Redwoods League, but also a vitriolic opponent of the English sparrow, advocate of eugenics (the leading force behind California's 1913 Sterilization Law), and president of the Immigration Study Commission, fighting to stem immigration from Mexico and the Philippines. He is so controversial that there is a campaign to remove his name from the arboretum of California State University—Sacramento.

It seems almost unfair to criticize such a well-written book, and one so rich in invasion arcana, but *American Perceptions* almost cries out for more comparative examination of the treatment of immigrant and invasive species in other countries. Coates presents many of the controversies in this history as unique consequences of currents in American culture, with very passing reference to Great Britain and France, but some of the same arguments and same coincidences of anti-immigrant sentiment and concern with invasive species have arisen elsewhere (e.g., Denmark today). On the other hand, one can hardly demand that the author of a 272-page book take on another task of at least equal scope and complexity.

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