prove incredibly rich in life forms, probably approaching the norms for tropical America where up to hundreds of species of small animals and plants, many of them new to science, have been found inhabiting a single large tree.

The question remains whether this great tropical resource in New Guinea, as elsewhere, will survive the next few decades. About 75 percent of the island's forests are still intact, and the pace of deforestation does not yet match that of such hot spots as Brazil and Borneo. The extremely rugged nature of New Guinea's terrain still protects. However, Beehler's observations over fifteen years indicate rapid development in such forest-ruining activities as gold mining, timber harvesting, cattle ranching, and slash-and-burn agriculture by rural populations.

In 1980, Beehler visited the highlands of Irian Jaya; he flew up to the great inland valley of the Balim River, setting of Robert Gardner's celebrated Dead Birds, filmed during the 1961 Harvard-Peabody Expedition that made the first outside contact with some of the valley's people. Peter Matthiessen's account of the 1961 expedition (Under the Mountain Wall, Viking, 1962) indicated more than forty thousand people inhabiting the valley, which is about ten miles across. Here, in 1980, Beehler estimated a population of "hundreds of thousands" and found a central town (Wamena), airstrip, hotel, and other amenities. He observed timber cutting and a sawmill on the surrounding slopes. The highland people of New Guinea, some of the last in the world to encounter civilization, have been extraordinarily quick to embrace it, as was noted by anthropologist Leopold Pospisil. He also made some first contacts in the 1950s, and was then astonished as, in little more than a decade, tribal entrepreneurs began to do business with regional commercial centers by chartered aircraft.

Is there hope for protecting New Guinea's wonderful and potentially valuable biodiversity—hope that might arise out of the quick aptitudes of its native people, some of whom have leaped out of the stone age only in the last half of the twentieth century? Bruce Beehler closes his book on such a note. Local education and training of "indigenous naturalists," he argues, is the key to effective conservation. "It is now time to share the excitement and responsibilities of studying tropical forests with those who will ultimately have to decide their fate" (243).

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Travel literature describing experiences in the South Pacific began to appear soon after early British, French, American, Russian, and other foreign explorers first encountered the remote volcanic and coraline landfalls of the world's largest ocean and their unique cultures. Nonfiction books, including
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journals and travelogues offering information concerning the natural history and peoples of these islands, continue to capture the imagination of a wide and enthusiastic audience. Andrew Mitchell's book *The Fragile South Pacific: An Ecological Odyssey* follows in this tradition of Pacific travel-related publications.

From both theoretical and practical perspectives, these islands provide natural laboratories for the investigation of biological and cultural evolution in isolation. Furthermore, because of the profound ecological and societal changes that have occurred in many tropical Pacific Islands during the past two and a half centuries, they also serve as microcosms for studying human-environment relationships, with implications for understanding more widespread modifications of the environment and culture.

In recent years, a global trend in the travel industry has been the dramatic increase of interest in "ecotourism." This new type of commercial travel, involving "ecological vacations," caters to a growing demand for opportunities that offer tourists a unique, environmentally oriented experience. Dwight Holing defines this type of tourism in his recent book, *Earthtrips: A Guide to Nature Travel on a Fragile Planet* (Living Planet Press, 1991), as "ecologically sensitive travel that combines the pleasures of discovering and understanding spectacular flora and fauna with an opportunity to contribute to their protection."

Positive assessments of the impact of ecotourism suggest that well-planned activities of this sort will help develop a greater public awareness of the remarkable biological and cultural diversity of the earth's biomes; and that this in turn will produce a better understanding of the need to protect the inorganic and organic resources of fragile ecosystems appropriately. Although Mitchell's book on the South Pacific does not encourage ecotourism, it is an informative introduction to the potential positive and negative aspects of further economic development and modernization of these islands, whether in the form of tourism, or other types of commercial activity.

In view of the increasing public concern for environmental quality, and more specifically, the plight of endangered species, and even endangered culture, Mitchell's book is a welcome addition to the growing literature dealing with human impact on the environment, especially the under-appreciated, imperiled biota of the region. His book helps fill a geographical gap in the literature, providing relevant, nontechnical, up-to-date information about the ecological state of affairs in several of the lesser-known areas in the South Pacific, as well as some of the more familiar island groups such as Hawai'i.

This book offers much for both scientists and nonscientists to enjoy and ponder. In a journalistic style that details his South Pacific travel experiences during recent years, Mitchell takes the reader on what he calls an "ecological odyssey." In the first chapter, he points out that there are many poorly known and under-appreciated organisms living "within the islands' forested and little visited interiors," and that the existence of these plants and animals is "now more at risk than ever before." Indeed his book is a self-pro-
claimed “tribute to these forgotten islanders, on the brink of a new Pacific age.”

Mitchell’s wanderings take us through the islands of Nauru, the Solomon, Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, Hawai‘i, the Societies, and lonely Rapa Nui (Easter Island). His excursions include visits to various types of marine and terrestrial environment where he shares his multifarious adventures in tropical Pacific natural history. His often colorful descriptions of unique flora and fauna will delight those with even a modicum of background in biology, and will also enlighten “old Pacific hands” with much field background in the region.

Throughout the book, Mitchell describes his travel into the field with regional experts to encounter rare and endangered species first hand. He takes us on trips to many kinds of environment, including multicolored, species-rich coral reefs, treacherous jagged landscapes of raised limestone, and wet rainforests festooned with ferns and mosses. He describes culturally interesting and sometimes sensitive places of prehistoric and more recent importance. The book is embellished by a series of color photographs, many of which were taken by the author. Several are of high quality, and most enhance the reader’s experience.

In sum, although it includes some minor errors, this volume is a valuable contribution to the popular literature addressing endangered species and endangered ecosystems in one of the most remote, but more intriguing, regions of the world. While describing the drastic exploitation of indigenous rainforests in some parts of the South Pacific, Mitchell makes the very important point that they contain a remarkably high proportion of unique species, and therefore their demise “will be felt far more than that of an equivalent area in the great rainforests of Amazonia or Southeast Asia would be.” I highly recommend this book to all who have professional or recreational interest in the tropical islands of the South Pacific.

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This book is a welcome addition to published literature on the Pacific Islands. Given the social and economic importance of governments in the Pacific, it is surprising that the academic community has not given more attention to the topic.

The volume covers a wide range of topics: the constitutional foundations of public administration, health administration, land management, communications policy and planning, managing public enterprises, foreign investment, fisheries management, and South Pacific regionalism. The contributing authors clearly are “widely experienced in the Pacific Islands region,” and their chapters reflect the depth of their knowledge of the topics they address.