What are protected areas? Why do we need protected areas? What is happening to protected areas? What would be the future of protected areas? 22 experts in parks planning and management including geographers, wildlife ecologists, and specialists in outdoor recreation and Parks Canada officials discuss these questions using case studies from Canada. Designed for advanced courses of tourism geography, natural resource management and recreation, the book is structured in six parts and the contents are supported with maps, photographs, tables, charts and text boxes.

Part one defines protected areas and identifies different types of protected areas with different management objectives such as tourism and recreation, wildlife protection, scientific research, education and protection of specific natural/ cultural features etc. However, the present book mainly focuses on National Parks. Part 1 also explores the historical background of evolution and expansion of National Parks system in Canada, and explains how the role of for parks has changed over time: for example, in the beginning, parks were considered mainly as a means of recreation, however with the decrease in undeveloped landscape, emphasis on ecological aspects is increasing.

Part two is about parks’ natural resources management. This section reviews conservation theories and practices used in parks management, especially ecological theories such as ecosystem-based management for protecting park ecosystems. It also discusses the principles related to the questions—Where should parks be located? How many parks are needed? Where should boundaries be placed? What criteria should be used for determining the size and the shape of parks?

Part three of the book deals with visitor use management in parks and explains social science theories and methods used as management tools for understanding visitor behavior and visitor management. These include direct and indirect management, assessment of the carrying capacity, recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS), limits of acceptable change (LAC), visitor impact management (VIM), visitor experience and resource protection (VERP) and visitor activity management process (VAMP) and forms of interpretation.

Part four discusses the impact of conservation and social science theories on policy and legislation as well as the practical difficulties in using policy and legislation in real situations. A case study of Banff National Park, Canada’s oldest and most visited national park has been used to illustrate the issues. This section considers not only governmental involvement, but also looks at the role of the private sector (the tourism industry in particular) in park management.

Part five further reveals the challenges in management of parks. One concern is the significance of Aboriginal people for park management. The challenges of park management with Aboriginal presence are explained using case studies. Furthermore, the relationship between local communities’ poverty and protected areas, the impact on local people, traditional and modern conservation approaches are also discussed through international perspectives. After emphasizing the importance of marine protected areas, another concern mentioned in this section is the challenges faced in their management. This section also explores the concept of “stewardship”, its importance and the additional challenges to parks management.

The last section of the book focuses on the future of parks. Some future scenarios have been outlined as factors to be considered by all park managers. These scenarios include climate change, improved technology and transportation and changes in demographics, unpredictability of natural processes, uncertainty about the consequences of human activities and uncertainty about future political and economic environments etc. Moreover, this section mentions the three scenarios prepared by the IUCN for the year 2023:

Scenario 1: The Triple Bottom Line (economic growth, social well-being and environmental
sustainability)

Scenario 2: The Rainbow (protected areas are managed for local interests and benefits) and

Scenario 3: Buy your Eden (the gap between the rich and the poor has widened).

Canada is considered a global leader in terrestrial protected area management and this book is an important source to learn about the Canadian experience in this field. However, the book mainly focuses on Parks and there is less discussion on other protected areas. Another drawback for beginners is that they may find it difficult to understand the charts, graphs and modules since relevant descriptions are not provided for each in particular. Some modules are improvements on previously developed modules and it may be necessary to refer to the previous discussions to understand the current context.

RANAWEERAGE Eranga Hemanthi Ranaweera

Department of Tourism Science,
Graduate School of Urban Environmental Sciences,
Tokyo Metropolitan University