

Adrian Linacre (ed): Forensic science in wildlife investigations

**CRC Press, Taylor and Francis Group, Florida USA, 2009, 162 pp,
ISBN: 978-0-8493-0410-1**

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Accepted: 14 January 2010 / Published online: 23 February 2010
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Forensic Science in Wildlife Investigations is the latest book in a series on forensic science topics from the Taylor and Francis Publishers. This book is aimed at a basic level and as such is targeted at police, lawyers, students and teachers as well as those scientists looking for a basic overview on wildlife forensics. The book is not overly long at 162 pages.

The book features 6 chapters written by various experts and covers a general overview of the discipline, an explanation of the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, better known as CITES, microscopic examination of hair, species identification using DNA analysis, DNA individualisation of animals and isotopic ratio analysis to determine geographic origins. The book is somewhat let down by the differing writing styles of the various authors which leads to a slightly disjointed reading experience; even the referencing styles vary between chapters. It is also of significant note that the world's largest forensic wildlife laboratory is not included as a contributing author nor are they mentioned.

The book does, however, provide a good general overview of the issues. The chapter on microscopic examination of hair would have benefited from a case example. The two chapters covering DNA analysis provide good overviews and highlight many important concepts, issues and need for further work in the area. However, the explanations of the various types of statistical analysis that can be applied to the DNA analysis results could be confusing to the novice reader, as it is not always clear how they are interrelated.

The last chapter looking at geographical origins of samples using isotope ratios is a good introduction to what is a difficult subject. However, the chapter does stray with examples of human and drug analysis, used presumably in lieu of wildlife forensic related examples. This is probably reflective of the infancy of this discipline and the lack of casework experience of the chapter author in this area. The book should not be viewed as a 'how to' but rather provides a good summary and raises the issues to be considered if investigating or studying in this area.

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