

IPCB

e-mail: info@ipcb.co.uk Tel: 02077082113

Extracted by IPCB The contents of the publication from which this extract has been taken is a copyright work and without prior permission may not be copied or reproduced for external purposes or resold.

The Times

Circulation: 399321  
Readership: 1351666  
Display Rate (£/cm<sup>2</sup>): 18.65

7 JAN 2013

## The Monday book review



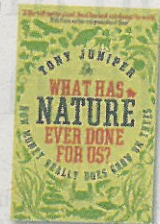
A polemic about the economic value of thinking green is vibrant and fascinating, writes **Patrick Kidd**

# Save the planet and save money

**A**s the lyricists of so many postwar love songs knew well, it is all about the birds and the bees. Get rid of them and we are in for a glum old time. So warns Tony Juniper, the former executive director of Friends of the Earth, in a book that looks at the cost, economic as much as ecological, of the damage done to nature by man.

Take the Indian vulture. Twenty years ago, there were some 40 million of them, performing a useful waste-management role in picking clean the carcasses of dead animals; now two of the three species in India are virtually extinct, an unintended consequence of the widespread use of an anti-inflammatory drug in livestock.

The drug passed to the vultures as they



*What Has Nature Ever Done for Us?*  
Tony Juniper

PROFILE BOOKS  
336PP £9.99\*

feasted on carrion and proved lethal. Carcasses were left to rot, a breeding ground for bacteria that led to a rise in human disease, such as anthrax. Vultures have been replaced by less thorough scavengers, with an increase in India's feral dog population of about seven million and a rise in people bitten by these dogs of about 40 million, leading to nearly 50,000 additional deaths from rabies. The estimated cost to India of the loss of its vultures is put at \$34 billion so, as the vultures in Disney's *The Jungle Book* ask: What are we gonna do then?

Juniper argues that it would be far cheaper to invest in less deadly livestock drugs and a large-scale vulture-breeding programme. The same philosophy can be applied in the orchards of the West, where Juniper says birds are a far cheaper form of pest control than chemicals.

And then there are the bees. Juniper reports on the economic cost of a decline in bee populations due to the over-use of chemicals and a fall in their natural habitats. He points to the Central Valley in California, where 80 per cent of the world's almonds are grown and where intensive farming has destroyed the bee population. Almond trees still need pollinating, so a costly

industry has grown up where more than a million bee hives are brought in for an annual six-week pollen-fest.

In Sichuan, China, 40,000 farmers perform an annual mating ritual, climbing their fruit trees to pollinate the flowers by hand using brushes made of chicken feathers and cigarette filters. Remember that next time you think you have a tough job. Again, Juniper argues that it would be cheaper to cut down on pesticides and invest in providing habitats for pollinators, as is happening in Yorkshire where a conservation group backed by the Co-op is constructing "bee roads" or corridors of flower-filled hedgerows across farmed landscapes to encourage our buzzing friends.

The book is filled with fascinating stories like this, but it is the emphasis on the economic cost that makes this stand out. Juniper, who writes with a vibrant journalistic style, knows that for the short-termist

decision-makers in government and business problems have to be presented with a dollar-value and solutions offered that will save money rather than just the planet. As Juniper claims, money really does grow on trees.



A fall in India's vulture population had serious results for humans

\* Order books at discount prices and with free p&p: 0845 2712134