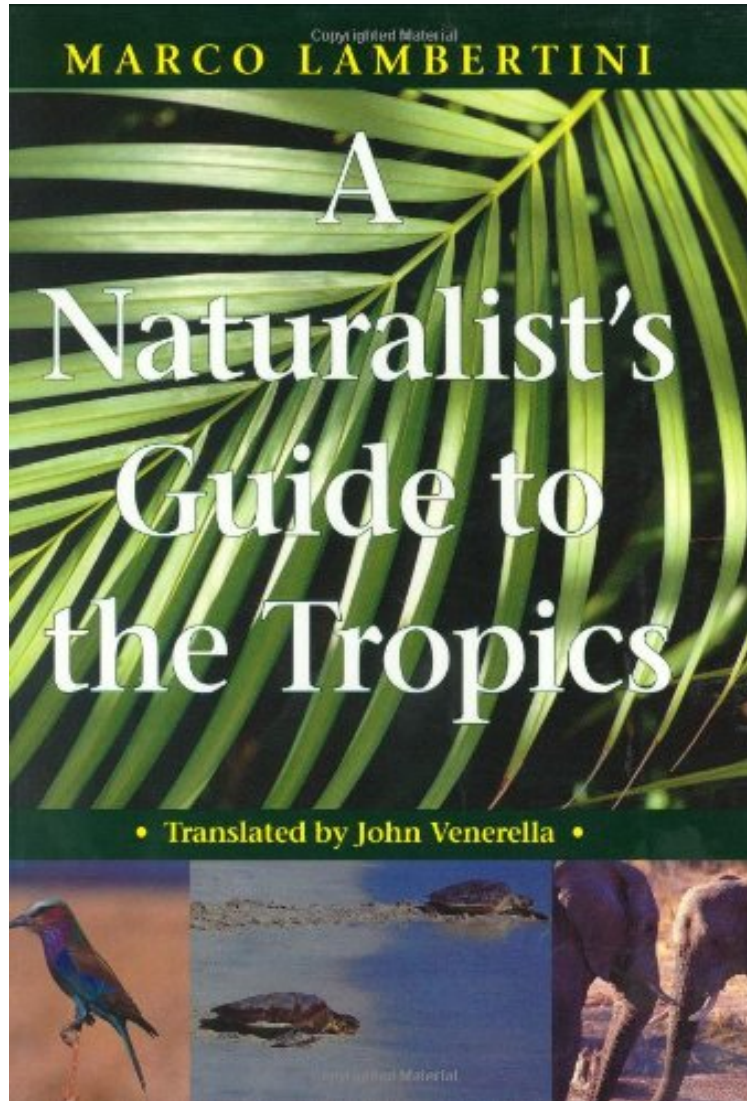


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## A Naturalist's Guide to the Tropics

Marco Lambertini

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#2088618 in Books 2000-05-15 Original language: English PDF # 1 7.50 x .90 x 5.251, 1.18 #File Name: 0226468283338 pages | File size: 16.Mb

**Marco Lambertini : A Naturalist's Guide to the Tropics** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Naturalist's Guide to the Tropics:

1 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Interesting (sans the "planet Earth is doomed" bit) By The Eye This book handles the broad topic of tropical ecology well. I especially enjoyed the maps showing the distribution of earth's tropical flora and fauna. The author seems knowledgeable enough and his observations harmonize well with those of other authors who have tackled the same subject. The text wasn't exactly spell-binding, but I was more interested in the information anyway. As I progressed into the book the decidedly unorganic scent of an eco-elitist began to emerge.

The author stopped hinting at mankind's planet-killing ways near the end of the book and donned the mantle of a unabashed treehugging lobbyist. Unexpected? Not really. Annoying? YES! Yeah, we all get it! We are hurting the earth! Please, for the love of all living things, can someone write a book on ecology without the obligatory "Look I AM a naturalist and I say we take care of our fragile planet" rant?! If you intend to read this book for information about the tropics, you probably won't be disappointed. If you're hoping to avoid self-declared manifestos on the environment, skip the "Evil megacorporations of economically well-off nations will be responsible for the death of us all!" parts.

Every year hundreds of thousands of travelers head for the Tropics to thrill to the raucous call of a howler monkey booming across the emerald cathedral of a rainforest, or to marvel at a brightly colored clown fish gliding fearlessly among the stinging tentacles of a sea anemone on a coral reef. Ranging from South and Central America to Africa, Southeast Asia, Oceania, and the Caribbean, *A Naturalist's Guide to the Tropics* provides engaging overviews of the geology, climate, soils, plants, animals, and major ecosystems of the Tropics. The book is beautifully illustrated throughout with color plates, photographs, and drawings. Whether you're a first-time visitor or a veteran of many trips, this convenient guidebook can help you plan your vacation and serve as a knowledgeable companion to answer the many questions that may arise during the course of your journey. Why are tropical birds and fishes so colorful? What is an atoll, and how do they form? Why are tropical soils red and sterile, while rainforests are lush and green? Why does Madagascar have lemurs but not monkeys? Special features of the book include chapters on the conservation status of the Tropics and how to prepare with "caution without obsession" for tropical dangers such as infectious diseases and charging rhinoceroses. The first comprehensive introduction to the natural history of the Tropics worldwide, *A Naturalist's Guide to the Tropics* has been completely revised and updated by the author and the translator to reflect the most current information available. \* first field guide in English to cover all the world's tropics, not just specific regions or countries \* more than 350 illustrations, many in color \* sturdy flexibound cover and compact size ideal for travelers \* boxes in text define scientific terms or explore side topics in more detail, such as "What Is Biodiversity?" and "Why Is Tropical Fauna So Colorful?" \* discusses tropical dangers and precautions to cope with them, such as vaccinations to obtain and foods to avoid

.com The word tropics conjures images of swaying palm fronds and white sand beaches. That is surely part of the picture, writes Italian science journalist Marco Lambertini in this fine environmental handbook, but keeping such a view is "reductive and risky," ignoring as it does the low temperatures, aridity, choppy seas, fogs, torrential rains, and general unpleasantness of so many tropical areas. Lambertini offers a fine survey of the many environments that make up "the tropics," which include not only coral reefs and monkey-dense hardwood forests, but also deserts and savannas, areas both rich in flora and fauna and almost unpopulated. Lambertini stresses the diversity of life in the world's tropical areas, offering accounts of several indicator species from aricas to zebras. He also observes that this diversity of life is in ever-increasing peril, and that "we are faced with a life or death struggle for the conservation of tropical wildlife and their habitats." The destruction of the tropics--whereby, for instance, only five percent of Brazil's original Atlantic forest now stands, many of the world's coral reefs have disappeared, and deserts have encroached on once-fertile grasslands--is not merely unfortunate, Lambertini insists; it also amounts to the depletion of an irreplaceable genetic bank. His guidebook makes for a catalog of the riches the tropics hold, and a highly useful reference. --Gregory McNamee