you are seeking information and case-studies on issues and the potential solutions on fisheries and conservation, then these volumes should provide you with a valuable source of highly relevant reference material.

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The riverscape and the river
S.M. Haslam (2008). Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, U.K. 420 pp. ISBN 978-0-521-83978-5, price £65 (hardback).

In this book Sylvia Haslam gives us a holistic view of the river system using the riverscape as a central concept defined as having three key elements: structure, function and change. She places the river and its ecology in the wider physical and cultural landscape and, hence, the book should appeal to ecologists, human and physical geographers and amateur naturalists.

The 15 chapters of the book cover the key elements of the riverscape, with three chapters on the river as a resource for both humans and wildlife, and the core themes of biological, physical and cultural building blocks the subject of several other chapters. Throughout the book human impact on the riverscape is catalogued and discussed in detail with chapters on the destruction and modification of the natural river and the fragmentation of habitat. The importance of the aesthetic quality of rivers is never forgotten. Often the author uses personal observation and her detailed knowledge of case studies to make her point. She is especially knowledgeable on the contrasting river systems of the U.K. and Cyprus where she has observed rapid change over her 35 year career.

Those who have read Haslam's books on river vegetation will be familiar with her unique writing style. Her text is easy to read in the most part and it is a pleasure to read the work of a scientific writer who is as comfortable quoting and referencing works from the literary as well as from the academic world. The text is illustrated with many of her own line drawings and photographs. In spite of the general themes which feature throughout the book, chapters function well as self contained essays making the book accessible to the reader that likes to dip in rather than read cover to cover.

Haslam was among a vanguard of aquatic scientists that combined geography with ecology and hence her perspective is both long-term and unique. Many other scientists now also take a more holistic view of river systems, and they especially will appreciate the compendium of Haslam's observations and ideas present in her latest book.

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Desmids of the lowlands – Mesotaeniaceae and Desmidiaceae of the European lowlands
Peter F.M. Coesel & Koos J. Meesters (2007). KNNV Publishing, The Netherlands. 351 pp, including 123 plates and a CD-ROM. ISBN 978-90-5011-265-9, price €89.95 (hardback).

Desmids are a group of beautiful and morphologically very distinctive green microalgae that are particularly common in nutrient poor or oligotrophic freshwaters. Their cells are strikingly symmetrical, each divided into two halves, the walls of which are often elaborately folded with intricate ornamentation. On account of their stringent ecological requirements, desmids are commonly used to monitor water quality and to assess conservation status.

Desmids of the Lowlands is an updated English language version of the Dutch language series 'De Desmidiaceeën van Nederland' (Coesel, 1982–1997). The flora includes all species ever recorded from the Netherlands and neighbouring lowland areas of Belgium and Germany. It is an attractive book that is accompanied by an excellent CD-ROM, which includes general information on the biology of desmids as well as *DesmidValue*, a programme that calculates the conservation value of a given habitat, based on the taxa present. It is a text particularly aimed at professionals in the field of water quality management, but will be appreciated and valued by all those who marvel at the diversity and beauty of microscopic life.

The book is well structured, beginning with a concise yet informative introduction to desmids, which is complemented by information on the accompanying CD-ROM. Included in the introduction is a key to the five families (Mesotaeniaceae, Gonatozygaceae, Peniaceae, Closteriaceae and Desmidiaceae – should the subtitle of the flora therefore not be Mesotaeniaceae and Desmidiales of the European Lowlands?), a summary of characteristic morphological features, modes of reproduction and information on where and how to sample desmids. Line drawings amply illustrate the most salient points.

The taxonomic account of more than 500 species and 150 varieties then follows, family by family. Within each family, there are keys which first of all aid identification to genus level and, subsequently, to species level. Particular taxonomic problems are acknowledged and sufficient auxiliary information provided, including figures, occurrence data and, for the Closteriaceae, details on the 'Closterio-curvimeter', a device to measure degree of curvature of the cell and, hence, to aid species

identification. Although perfectly adequate, the keys do not rival in clarity the illustrated classification of Lenzenweger (1996). Taxa are pictured in the series of 123 plates, although page numbers would hasten access to these.

In summary, this is an inviting and reasonably priced text. My only concern is that it may be used indiscriminately outside the Netherlands and adjacent lowland areas. Although this may be appropriate because of the 'predominantly cosmopolitan nature of most species', I believe a more cautious approach should be taken in light of the growing evidence for cryptic diversity and restricted distributions in all microalgal groups, including desmids (Blackburn & Tyler, 1987; Ichimura, 1996).

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