Book Review

J. Patrick Gray Primate Sociobiology

Human Relations Area Files Press, New Haven 1985 376 pp.; US\$ 30.00 ISBN 0-87536-344-X

This book is a companion to the same author's A Guide to Primate Sociobiological Theory and Research, published by HRAF in 1984, but it is apparently intended to be able to stand on its own as an introduction to primate sociobiology. In Primate Sociobiology, Gray reviews over 650 publications relevant to the sociobiological study of both human and nonhuman primates.

Following two introductory conceptual chapters, we are given good, balanced summaries of theory and evidence on six topics: Ecological Sociobiology, Nepotism, Reciprocal Altruism, Parental Investment, Sexual Selection (two chapters), and Human Reproductive Strategies.

Throughout the book, humans are treated as one among many primate species, but they are given more emphasis than the others (which Gray terms 'alloprimates', an unnecessary addition to our language generally, but perhaps of some value in this context).

Gray's approach is a careful, thoughtful, dispassionate one, but since no really new evidence or the-

ory are put forward, and since there are not tables, diagrams or photographs, the resulting product is not a stimulating read and its general utility is a little unclear. It is not of much value as an undergraduate text because it is too dull, it is written at too high a level, and it is too expensive. It would probably be useful as a reference work for an advanced-level seminar (in fact, the book seems to have developed in part from the activities of a seminar group at Northwestern University), and it is a useful guidebook for researchers and teachers in anthropology, primatology and sociology who wish to be briefed or reminded of the state of the art in a particular area of sociobiology. As a reference work it would be more useful if it included a glossary; such a glossary might have explained the meaning of two of Gray's other rather irritating neologisms, 'holospecies' and 'holo-cultural' studies (these are apparently cross-species and cross-cultural studies).

For an unillustrated paperback Primate Sociobiology has a high price but a cheap look: the front cover carries a peculiar assortment of rather stylized primates (five macaques, six baboons, five gorillas and three well-shaved and well-coiffured humans), all of them except two mothers with infants looking very asocial.

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