

culture could simply harvest more (and grasslands would improve), with Iceland having a double amount of sheep. Similar statements on increased productivity and “positive effects” of climate change are made by the authors for their Nepal study area! Another disturbing topic is the missing demand to stop overconsuming and reduce the wasteful use of fossil fuel and contamination of the atmosphere by the global community. Such omissions are no surprise considering that this project is funded by one of the wealthiest nations of the world is among the biggest oil and gas producers (the book receives the general governmental approval through a Foreword by the Norwegian ambassador who visited Manang briefly). Together with the Volkswagen Foundation funding chapters of economic interest (ethnomedicine to be exploited by the western pharmaceutical industry), the academic involvement of Bergen University promoting uncritically all such concepts needs to be seen as ‘dubious’.

The reader will easily find other Norwegian views and biases imposed throughout the text; e.g., “the social landscape of Manangi is at the verge of change and towards attaining a new identity” (instead of stating that it will go extinct, creating much human suffering; a path that in times of globalization many other cultures are already on), or that development of the study area would be driven by social factors, not climate ones (although the latter clearly affects income and resources; e.g., water and growing season length). Consequently, this book falls short on key ingredients for all our survival: appropriate social justice, global village and adaptive sustainable management.

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MISCELLANEOUS

A Mountain Year: Nature Diary of a Wilderness Dweller

By Chris Czajkowski. 2008. Harbour Publishing, P.O. Box 219, Madeira Park, British Columbia V0N 2H0 Canada. 192 pages. 36.95 CDA Cloth.

A Mountain Year by Chris Czajkowski is a delight to read and conjures up all the unspoiled beauty of the northern interior of British Columbia. The book is an illustrated journal of a year spent in a retreat away from the rush and mindless bustle of the busy city.

Czajkowski has spent twenty years up at Nuk Tessli, an isolated wilderness region east of Bella Coola, south of Tweedsmuir Provincial Park and five hundred miles north of Vancouver. There are no roads into the area on the western side of the Coastal Mountains, is known as the Charlotte Uplands. The flora ranged from stunted high altitude forest and rises to sub alpine and krummholz.

When Czajkowski first arrived on her own in 1988, there was no cabin there; she logged some trees with her own hands to build the first one. She used chain saws, ropes skids and block and tackle all hauled in by herself. After three years, two more cabins were built and now naturalists and hikers visit in the summer as paying guests. All that is impressive enough but is by no means all the journal teaches us.

This is a journal illustrated by her pen, pencil and watercolour sketches which are both delightful and informative. She has given us the Latin names of the illustrated flowers but not the authority for the names. This is not a book for identification of the plants to below the species level, they do not give enough detail for that, but as paintings they are very artistic. The illustrations of the birds and animals she observed are sketched and full of life and accurate observation. The

sketches give the journal a most personal character. But these illustrations are not the only gifts of this book. Czajkowski is obviously a devoted naturalist and a keen and knowledgeable observer.

The journal takes one through a year in the wilderness, starting at the end of 2004. It conjures up the great sense of silence that can be found in mountain and forests. The minus 22°C can almost be felt. This is a hard, tough life she leads and shares with two dogs. But she is attuned to nature and so observant of the atmosphere, the clouds and colours, the animals, birds and flowers that share the environment with her.

She has no electricity and uses her computer only when the sun has powered her photovoltaic system. She chops and drags trees for her fuel and heating and uses candles for light. To get to her cabin she hikes in several miles from where a small plane has deposited her and her luggage. She uses a sled to carry her luggage to the cabin. Having settled in, she has to get her water. For this in winter, she uses a chain-saw to cut through the ice crust on the lake and draws her water through the hole. There is no easy living here.

Day by day she records the weather and the birds that visit her feeders. At the end of February she gets a flight out, after some delays, to shop for supplies, give some talks, and brush up her first-aid in case it is needed by her guests or herself. The guests start arriving with the summer. Some come from overseas and help with the maintenance of the trails, blazing new ones and other chores. All the while Czajkowski records the flowers as they come into bloom, and paints them; lists the birds and observes their behaviour. Struggling at times with swarms of flies and mosquitoes, she leads

her guests to all the places of interest and teaches them about the ecology, etc. But summer passes quickly and she is alone again to write, paint and update her records and journal. During the fall she flies out to give lectures and to promote her books.

This is a book that teaches one about a life of solitude with nature, about being self-sufficient, and about

one of the unspoilt wilderness areas of British Columbia, of which there are fewer and fewer. I thoroughly enjoyed it and learnt a great deal and recommend it to all nature lovers.

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Choosing Wildness: My Life Among the Ospreys

By Claude Arbour, translated by Joan Irving. 2008. Greystone Books, #201-2323 Quebec Street, Vancouver, British Columbia V5T 4S7 Canada. 242 pages. 24.95 CAD Paper.

Choosing Wildness is a book for ornithologists and conservationists to savour. For 20 years, Claude Arbour lived year-round at Lac Villiers, 47° north latitude, in 2500 square kilometres of pristine wilderness far north of Joliette, Quebec. When Arbour first arrived, a pack of wolves occupied the adjacent forest, along with raccoons, pine martens and beaver. Supplies to last the six-month winter isolation had to be transported by boat to the cabin each fall. Emergency travel in winter, if required, was by snowplane or airplane, but during freezeup and breakup, even these modes were impossible for weeks on end. His beloved dog team provided winter transportation; human neighbours were 32 and 40 km distant. On one level, Arbour's tale is one of wilderness survival.

The book, however, is far more than that. It is also an account of the diligence and stewardship of a dedicated naturalist. Aided by sustained contributions from one hundred individual supporters of La Fondation Naturaliste de Lac Villiers, Claude made careful studies of the region's flora and fauna, including over 200 species of birds, and sent each supporter a written report each season. As the subtitle intimates, ospreys soon became one of his main projects. Early on, he built the first of nearly a hundred osprey platforms; the next summer the first of about 200 osprey nestlings fledged; subsequently, between 15 and 20 young fledged each year. One summer he logged 400 hours watching the nearest osprey nest to determine the dates when eggs were laid and later hatched, and when the chicks fledged. He recorded the number and size of fish brought to the osprey nest. Once, when a male osprey disappeared and two of the three chicks had died of starvation, Claude delivered food twice daily for the female and surviving chick, which he banded before it fledged. Once, he threw a fish out over the lake and the female osprey caught it on the fly. Sixty-one of his large osprey platforms persisted until his final survey in 2006; 19 breeding pairs were present that summer.

Injured ospreys and bald eagles were cared for and rehabilitated over long periods, some brought to him by the Union québécoise pour la réhabilitation des oiseaux de proie. Raptor and prey interactions he observed included a bald eagle that chased a Canada goose. Arbour contributed many observations to the provin-

cial database and provides accounts of spotted sandpipers, bald eagles, ravens, pileated woodpeckers, and sightings of a rare prothonotary warbler and Cape May warbler. He also observed a semipalmated plover with three young; however, the location makes it highly improbable that the birds nested locally.

Claude eventually cleared 12 km of winter dog-team and summer hiking trails leading from his cabin to adjacent lakes. One project, building platforms to assist loons in using nests away from the wash of the occasional fisherman's motorboat, was not successful. Sometimes he took extraordinary measures. When the dam at the bottom of the lake burst, Claude placed 150 bags of sand to plug the holes and thus saved the lake's population of northern pike. He also spent 90 hours mapping water depths throughout the lake.

There is more than just a hint of romance. Danielle, a nurse who shared his love of birds, came to visit him. Claude was extremely fortunate that she returned and stayed to share his joy of observing bountiful nature. She was willing to share all the hardships – and pleasures – of an extremely primitive life style. For example, Claude's routine was to have a daily bath in the lake until it froze over. His outdoor privy had a special winter seat sculpted from an insulating material that reflected heat immediately upon contact. He cut 35 cords of wood for fuel each winter. The couple raised two sons in the wilderness; Danielle covered their school lessons in two hours a day, four days a week, until they reached high school age and moved out to Joliette for their schooling. Both boys became self-reliant and trustworthy.

What had Claude and Danielle achieved? Useful data were collected. Platforms encouraged the Osprey population to increase. People were educated to value the wilderness and some shotguns were put away for good as television documentaries about Claude's work were shown across Quebec. Sadly, as the years went by, forested hilltops within view of their cabin were clear-cut and a road reached Lac Villiers, ending their isolation. But on the plus side, the new road allowed Claude and Danielle to take an annual breeding bird survey during their final four years of residence there.

I wish a map had been included, but anyone with a computer can rectify this deficiency by clicking Google Maps, then typing in Saint-Michel-Des-Saints (at the north end of Quebec Highway 131) and then Lac Villiers – in the wilderness about 50 km farther to the