## Guidelines for Book Reviews in *The Canadian Field-Naturalist*

Thank-you for your interest in reviewing books for *The Canadian Field-Naturalist* (CFN). The guidelines below lay out our expectations for your review. Should they seem daunting, please keep in mind that the key word is ‘guidelines,’ not ‘instructions’!

Publishers provide books in the hope that they will be reviewed and that reviews will be published in a reasonable amount of time. Thus, we ask reviewers to provide their reviews **within 2 to 3 months** of receiving the book.

A book review is different from a book report. The latter is used to describe the contents of a book in thematic detail. While your review should tell us what the book is about, the heart of a good review is your critical evaluation of the book. Various questions should be kept in mind to achieve this, including (but not limited to): what kind of book is it (memoir, scholarly, popular, textbook, one in a series, field guide)? for whom is the book intended? what are the author’s objectives, and are they met? are the book’s arguments and theses well presented? what are the book’s major merits and possible shortcomings or weaknesses? If the book is a subsequent edition, briefly describe, if possible, how it differs from the previous edition(s)?

Keep in mind that your review is about the book, not an essay on the subject field; nor should it be an extensive commentary on your personal activities in the subject area. Whether or not you can recommend the book, and to whom you would recommend it, are important elements of your review.

Quotations may be made from the book to aid in your analysis. These should be kept short and to the point, with page numbers in brackets, thus: “brief quotation” (p. xx). Please do not quote book jackets and other reviews – your analysis must be based on your reading of the book. Comments on the author’s background, expertise and writing style are welcome. Note-taking and developing a thesis about the book early in your reading may be helpful when it comes to writing up your assessment. And even before you begin reading the book, checking its preface, table of contents, and back matter such as end-notes, bibliography, and index should provide a good feel for it.

Reviews should be about **500-1000 words** in length. Please remember that quality is better – and more difficult to achieve! – than quantity. Although MS Word is preferred, the word processor used is up to you. The book’s full title and publisher information, including number of pages, price and binding, should be at the top, as per the CFN style; no other title is necessary. Any literature cited in your review should be noted in a list of ‘Literature Cited’ at the end of the review, following your name, affiliation (if desired) and home city. Any references to other literature should be highly relevant to an appreciation of the book. Please examine our latest book reviews for proper formatting; the most recent as well as previous reviews are freely available at: <http://canadianfieldnaturalist.ca/index.php/cfn>.

Please email your review to the Book Review Editor at [b.cottam@rogers.com](mailto:b.cottam@rogers.com) with a short version of the title in the subject heading. Reviews go through an editorial process, including formatting, copy-editing and proof-reading. The first step in this process should be taken by you, the reviewer! (This step will be easier if you read your review as though someone else wrote it.) Reviews deemed over-length will be shortened. Should major editing be required, your review will be returned by email for your approval and final changes.

Thanks again for accepting the responsibility of preparing a review for our journal. The quality and reputation of *The Canadian Field-Naturalist* depend on its many contributors. We appreciate your efforts.

Barry Cottam

CFN Book Review Editor