

and then finished with individual accounts for the 16 different species. In contrast, toothed whales included three detailed and sequential species accounts followed by abbreviated discussions on three other species.

Overall, this revised edition contains some of the most comprehensive descriptions of mammal species found in North America. Notwithstanding the aforementioned criticisms, the editors have continued the fine tradition of thoroughness and scholarship established in their first volume. Not only are the accounts a summary of our biological knowledge of the larger species but the information also is interpreted and presented in the context of management and conservation. This book will be the primary reference source that bridges the gap between applied biology and policy

implementation. A companion volume dealing with the small mammals, and the other half of mammalian diversity, in North America would be a nice complement but perhaps wishful thinking for others to undertake. One noticeable drawback is that the publication is expensive, which will discourage students, researchers, and government workers from purchasing it for their personal library. This book, however, is a required monograph for institutional and departmental libraries that have an interest in not only mammals and their conservation or management but also wildlife ecology, in general.

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Pete Dunne on Bird Watching: The How-to, Where-to and When-to of Birding

By Peter Dunne. 2003. Houghton Mifflin, 222 Berkeley Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02116. USA. 352 pages. U.S. \$12.

Birdwatching is one of the fastest growing outdoor activities in North America. Once the obsession of a few, it is now firmly lodged in the mainstream. Bird books have proliferated, the optical equipment gets better every year, and birding clubs and media are now commonplace: there are even television shows about birding. With all these riches, what is a novice to do? Pete Dunne's latest work is a good place to start. With this cleverly thought out book, Pete Dunne starts at the beginning and provides the tools and tips to make birding a lifelong journey of discovery.

The author is a gifted communicator and teacher, making the material accessible and a fun read, while at the same time packing dozens of tools and tips into three hundred information-filled pages. The place he starts is the backyard – precisely the place where many people first get hooked on birds. He then walks the reader through the tools of the trade, the fundamentals of birding, applied birding (“for fun, purpose... even profit!”), eventually bringing the reader full circle to ethics and a solid conclusion that reminds us of why we birdwatch. Each chapter ends with a useful summary of key learning objectives, which helps to hammer home the important points. He keeps the material alive by interspersing anecdotes from his own rich experience, and others gleaned from a veritable who's who of North American birding. There are plenty of photos (black-and-white, this is no coffee table book) to illustrate points the author wants to make. The author's dry wit frequently surfaces, so be prepared for the occasional good laugh.

Some of the advice is priceless, particularly ten key questions to ask when identifying a bird, and a section entitled “learning to see.” This is complemented by practical advice on things like how to pick binoculars, field guides and spotting scopes. For example, the author provides a helpful hint on how to check to

see if that great pair of binoculars you are thinking of buying is in alignment; if they are not, your eyes will suffer.

There is also plenty of advice – generic and specific – on “where to go” and how to maximize your birding once you get there (my favorite: “the power of the pause”, wait, and birds will show up). He also talks about how to contribute to the store of knowledge while having good fun, for example by participating on Christmas Counts and Breeding Bird Atlases. In the final chapters the author notches the level up several grades, letting novice birders in on some of the inner secrets of successful birders like how to be where and when the birds are. He even divulges the secret of the perfect Eastern Screech Owl imitation (I'm not telling, you will have to read the book to find out.)

Are there things I do not like about this book? Not many, but there are a few. The format, with plenty of inserts, is occasionally disconcerting, particularly some of the “insider's insights” with sometimes abrupt shifts from the author's voice to another, in one case into a lecturing tone thankfully absent in the rest of the book. Sometimes the order of things is confusing, for example the discussion on spotting scopes is widely separated from that on binoculars. While this follows a logical sequence (most birders start with binoculars and only “graduate” to scopes later on in their birding careers) it does seem misplaced. The advice provided is solid and if followed will make for better birders, but there are a few minor missteps. For example, the author perpetuates the oft-repeated myth that European birds are less responsive to squeaking than those in North America – not true in my experience. The book is also unabashedly North American centric; there is very little here about the rest of the world. Occasionally the book drifts towards the advertorial, for example a limited number of bird tour companies are highlighted, but generally the author strikes the right balance. There is one point in the book that I objected

to, and that was the description of the author, in a line with a dozen other birders, wading through a long grass prairie in an attempt to flush a Baird's Sparrow. While this anecdote was properly set in a discussion of ethics (he stepped on a grouse nest) the action described was out of character with the rest of the book (or even the advice provided in the rest of the book) and the ethical dimensions could have been more forcefully argued. These points do not seriously detract from the book, and I would rank it among the best birding "how-to" books I have encountered.

This book is aimed at the novice. If you have just started birding, this book is for you. If you know someone who has just started, this book would make a great gift. You may even want to lend it to your spouse, friends or relatives; anyone who is trying to figure out what all the fuss is about. Better still: donate it to the local school library after you are done with it. Will there be more to learn after you put this book down? Absolutely, but that is the whole point of the book: birding is a lifelong discovery.

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BOTANY

Alpine Plants of North America: An Encyclopaedia of Mountain Flowers from the Rockies to Alaska

By Graham Nicholls and Rick Lupp, Consulting Editor. 2003. Timber Press, 133 SW 2nd Avenue, Ste. 450, Portland, Oregon 97204 USA. 344 pages. U.S. \$49.95. Cloth.

Entitled *Alpine Plants of North America*, this 344 page book takes an all-embracing look at many of nature's floral delights, which the author explains as being categorized as alpine, though they may be found anywhere from seaside to high mountain. Mr. Nicholls wins my applause by telling us that he likes to limit his plants to 30 cm (12 inches) in height, which I find keeps plants in scale in an average home rock garden.

The title might be a bit amusing to a Canadian – it appears to have been accomplished by excluding any plant references to land we hold dear! We are told the book is intended for practical, on site use, both in the field and in an owner's garden – generally Graham has succeeded but he falters a bit in the area of plant identification – something which is vital to enthusiastic alpine plant lovers. May I suggest that a few less species photographs and more emphasis on their clarity (there were a number of photos from which identification would be difficult if not impossible). More close-ups of flowers and foliage would help a great deal.

I thought that the format of the book was excellent: information on plants' natural growing areas and cultural tips made for a most helpful package of useful information. Choosing the best location and growing medium for our newest acquisitions is very often a painful experience. Having several identical plants and plenty of spare sites is sometimes our best hope of

success. However, a careful reading of the needs of each species covered in this book should save many early plant funerals!

The introduction of little known species is great fun and I applaud Mr. Nicholls's inclusion of *Talimium* in his writing. I have only one species in my collection to date – *T. selinoides* – but after seeing photos of such beauties as *T. brevifolium*, and *T. 'Zoe'*, I shall be very soon searching for more. It is most amazing to observe the miniature size, quantity and length of blooming period in this enjoyable plant.

It is refreshing to find a proven plantsman willing to share his knowledge of plant propagation so freely. This is most evident in his detailed directions concerning the taking of cuttings from various species of Phlox. Perhaps his most helpful writings in this area are the descriptions of each species' natural surroundings, soil conditions, and moisture tolerance. The book entices the reader to find suppliers of seeds, plants, or best of all to follow in Graham Nicholls' footsteps – to see at first hand the alpine specimens he has so carefully covered.

Both author Graham Nicholls and consulting editor Rick Lupp have done a magnificent job in producing a book of much needed information about the identification and growing of alpine plants and done it in a neat, readable, and orderly fashion. This book will give the reader true value for his or her money.

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Arboretum America, A Philosophy of the Forest

By Diana Beresford-Kroeger. 2003. University of Michigan Press, 839 Greene Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104-3209 USA. 196 pages. U.S. \$29.00.

Arboretum America, A Philosophy of the Forest is a unique work. It's a book about trees in a compound context – global, local and personal – informed by an

intriguing variety of perspectives, including ecology, ethnobotany, horticulture, ethnology and mythology. The result is an eclectic and appealing book, no great surprise considering that the author, Canadian Diana Beresford-Kroeger, is, according to the back cover, a "botanist, medical and agricultural researcher, lecturer and self-defined "renegade scientist" in the fields of