

These accounts are illustrated [black-and-white line drawings] and give the reader a very exhaustive understanding of the individual species.

Fishes of Canada's National Capital Region [NCR] has similar coverage to the above. Also included are photographs of out-of-water fish where these are available and range maps within the National Capital Region. I decided to try out the site to identify small fish I saw in Mud Lake in Ottawa. After comparing descriptions and other information I decided it might be a Central Mudminnow. To be certain I would need the fish in hand. I might raise eyebrows, or worse, if I started netting fish in a public park.

The Freshwater Fishes of Iraq contains only a checklist and bibliography at this date.

Some of the advantage that this web site [and all others] have is that material [such as photos] can be included as required, poor quality photos can be replaced if better become available, multiple photo can shows all features (not the case in a book where cost and space are limitations), text and other errors can be corrected, feedback from readers is easily incorporated, new information can be added as science progresses, in some cases differing view points can be presented at length, saving on costs of paper and distribution

over the book format. The site can be accessed from anywhere in the world [with Internet access] without needing to carry around hard copy, it is copied by students, researchers and naturalist for their own projects.

This site is a wonderful source of information in a subject area that is often difficult to access. It is very easy to navigate and loads quickly [but it is not as user-friendly as a book]. I am not one to load up my favourites folder unless it is a site I will use frequently. I suggest this is one of those sites, especially if you live in the Ottawa-Gatineau area (National Capital Region). I also need to trust the information supplied. The generic question remains in that sites like this have not been reviewed as a book would be. Readers on the internet will need to verify the quality of a website before trusting the data. As Brian Coad is a respected research scientist (at the Canadian Museum of Nature) with extensive field experience in the Ottawa District and Iran, this is not an issue, despite its being a personal, rather than an institutional site. At least you should take a look at it as I am sure you will learn as I did.

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BOTANY

Exploitation and Utilization of Chinese Spice Plant Resources

By Zhang Weiming and Xiao Zhengchun et al. 2007. Southeast University Press. 722 pages. Price 186.00 CNY.

Spice plants are in a special category in the plant kingdom, and have been popularly used for various purposes in different countries or regions of the world. The history of the use of spice has even exceeded recorded history of human beings. Early humans might have used spice plants to preserve meat, fish or other food, reduce the annoying odors of various foods, or increase a special flavor when cooking. Gradually, these began to expand the range of use of spice plants.

Spice plants are closely related to the daily lives of human beings. Systematic research and summary of them is necessary, however, as this has not been well done before, at least in China. Now, this situation has been changed by the publication of the book *Exploitation and Utilization of Chinese Spice Plant Resources* by Zhang Weiming and Xiao Zhengchun et al. The authors have been engaged in research work on spice plant resources for a long time. They have conducted several research projects relating to Chinese spice plants in the last few decades, and obtained valuable and abundant data in this field. Meanwhile, they also collected other abundant information on spice plant resources at home and abroad. Based on these data and information, they produced this massive book.

There are a number of climate zones in China. Different environmental conditions allow for the growth of an abundance of plant species, including spice plants. Except for a few tropical species, most of the spice plants grow in China. China was one of the earliest countries to use spices. There are some records on the aromatic and spicy plants in the Book of Songs, the Book of Mountains and Seas, and other book that are more than 2000 years old. Over a long time, due to the various usage of different types of spice plants in cooking, the people living in various areas of China formed a variety of eating habits, reflected in the so-called eight genres of cuisine of Chinese dishes. Hence, we might say that one of the most important reasons that Chinese food (or any other regional food) enjoys a world-wide reputation is its unique use of spices in cooking.

The indigenous spice plants in China are abundant. Furthermore, over the years, China introduced many foreign-origin species. The book not only is a systematic and comprehensive monograph on the spice plant resources of China, but also has its value as a reference for other related countries. The book is divided into two parts. The first part is a general introduction to spice plants, including the history of spice plants, the general situation of Chinese spice plant resources, the main ingredients and the application of spice plants,

the processing technology and the development of spice plants, and the strategy of the development of China spice plant resources. The second part is the special issues, including a total of 134 kinds of commonly used spices, and more than 200 spice plant species. For each spice plant species, the ecological environment, history of use, chemical ingredients, comprehensive methods of use, exploitation of related products, standardization and cultivation techniques, and so on were comprehensively introduced. The typically introduced spice plant species in this part include *Capsicum frutescens*, *Allium sativum*, *Aglaia odorata*, *Allium cepa*, *Allium fistulosum*, *Allium porrum*, *Allium sativum*, *Artemisia vulgaris*, *Illicium verum*, *Foeniculum vulgare*, *Levisticum officinale*, *Mentha haploca-*

lyx, *Pimpinella anisum*, *Sesamum indicum*, *Zanthoxylum bungeanum*, *Zanthoxylum simulans*, and *Zingiber officinale*, among others.

The book was well written with few errors, in a style of writing that can be easily understood by non-scientists. As a comprehensive book, it is suitable for anyone who is engaged in the various areas of research and application of spice plants.

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MISCELLANEOUS

Arctic Hell Ship

By W. Barr. 2007. University of Alberta Press, Ring House 2, Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2E1. 318 pages, 34.95 CAD Cloth.

More of a human history than a natural history book, this tale covers part of one of the great sagas of Canada's north. The Franklin Expedition left Britain with high hopes and the best resources available — well almost. It vanished in 1845 and spawned at least two dozen searches to solve the mystery of the disappearance. These efforts in turn have led to a flood of books and scholarly articles.

So do we need another treatise? The answer is yes in this case. Barr's contribution covers the 12th search by Captain R. Collinson aboard the *HMS Enterprise* with Robert John Le Mesurier M'Clure, as second in command, on the *HMS Investigator*. Barr gives us an extremely detailed description of life on one of Her Majesty's ships in the 1800s. So often the other books concentrate on the leaders and their accomplishments, so we learn little of how the crew fares. Barr remedies this by telling us about many of the individual sailors. The "story" is very simple. This was a voyage that produced limited results and suffered a lot of bickering between the officers. As a result, the ship's, logs and letters contain irritating daily details that show what life was really like.

Collinson was a good seaman and surveyor, but he was clearly not a leader. He picked on very minor transgressions and turned them into major disciplinary actions. He sowed unnecessary seeds of discord, interspersed by bouts of humanity. In hindsight, his biggest failure was that he did not do enough. He was charged with rescuing Franklin's men and given the resources to do it, and yet he spent a lot of time sailing back and forth, unable to make a clear decision. His sledging trips were too little and too late. The other ships in his command (which got "separated" early in the expedition) went farther and did more. When

Collinson did make progress he found notes from either M'Clure or Dr. John Rae showing that they had searched the area earlier. In the tough conditions on board ship during an Arctic winter this debilitating caution and indecisiveness coupled with petty decisions on discipline must have made an unhappy ship full of exasperated people.

Collinson returned to Britain, having failed to solve the Franklin issue, demanding courts-martial for his officers. The lords of the Admiralty wisely declined to take action. Public exposure of such silly shenanigans would do the service no good.

The most notorious British naval captain of this era is Bligh. In spite of the fact that his reputation owes more to the movies than reality, Bligh was a superb navigator, excellent seaman and a relatively humane captain. He personally intervened in the trials of the captured mutineers, got some set free and obtained reduced sentences for others. He died as a Vice-Admiral. Collinson's dithering and his stubborn need for absolute discipline would have made him a better candidate for Hollywood's spite, yet even this would be unfair. How would we all fare under such harsh conditions?

Collinson did make Vice-Admiral, after serving at Trinity House, the establishment that maintained the aids to navigation, where he rose to deputy master. He remained at Trinity House until retirement, clearly a better bureaucrat than expedition leader. Perhaps the error lies with the lords of the Admiralty. They fell into that awful trap. They promoted a very technically competent person to a supervisor, a move that does not always work. In particular, voyages to the Arctic, even today, need competent leaders. Collinson did not come close to Nansen, Shackleton, Amundsen, or even Scott in his ability to deal with people.

While Barr has produced a minutely detailed document, using all available evidence, rather than a dis-

Erratum The Canadian Field-Naturalist 126(4)

In response to the review of *Contributions to the History of Herpetology*. CFN 126(3): 344-345, the book's editor Kraig Adler pointed out (personal communication to FRC 12 May 2013): "Only one small correction. Mrs. Martof used a kitchen knife, not a gun. She told the police she slipped while cutting some pizza. But Bernie was stabbed up under his rib cage several times!"

Erratum The Canadian Field-Naturalist

It has come to our attention that sections of many of the book reviews by Li Dezhi and Qin Aili were copied from sources without attribution. The journal and the authors apologize for this oversight.