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## **KNEE-HIGH NATURE WINTER — A GUIDE TO NATURE ACTIVITIES AND FUN**

DIANNE HAYLEY and PAT WISHART. 1993. Illustrated by Jo-Ei Berg. Lone Pine Publishing, Edmonton. 170 pp., coil bound, soft cover. \$14.95.

Prairie winters can be long and cold, but they don't have to be boring. The natural world is still there, although hidden and sheltered from the elements. The authors state, "We want to increase awareness and appreciation of nature, to encourage adults to share their knowledge with children, and to help create opportunities for children to share their sense of wonder with adults." This is a good resource book to achieve that end.

This is one in a series of four seasonal resource books. *Spring in Alberta*, *Fall in Alberta* and *Summer in Alberta* are the other books in the series. The *Winter* text includes sections on hibernation, winter bird species, snow and ice, rodents, weasels, hares and rabbits, the deer family, wolves, coyotes and foxes, and a section on winter nights. Each section provides basic yet interesting information. Topics are brief so that children aren't overwhelmed with detail and information.

Although this book is written for Alberta, it is applicable in provinces and states that have prairie, parkland, mountain or boreal forest ecosystems. Species are included from all these ecosystems. For example, information is given on Steller's Jays and Mountain Goats from the mountains, and Sage Grouse and Pronghorn from the prairies. As well, information on other species like Downy Woodpeckers

and White-tailed Deer that occur in all regions is given.

The author states, "This is a book for children to use with adults. Parents, teachers and group leaders can share the book with very young children, and older children can enjoy and learn from the book on their own." The text is easy to read and isn't too technical. The book could be read easily by most grade four to six students. The natural history descriptions of the various animals are appropriate for a wide age range of children. Activities, songs and poems could be used with primary students. Virtually every page has one or two line drawings to illustrate the topic.

This book has a variety of activities provided for each topic of study. Each section provides natural history information and drawings, as well as other activities such as craft projects, poems, songs, and games. For example, in the chapter on winter birds, the book describes the characteristics by which more than 30 common winter birds can be identified, interesting "Neat Notes," children's poems and songs, a story about a chickadee, an art activity project, and a bird feeding activity. All the other chapters follow a similar format incorporating several activities.

*Knee High Nature\Winter* is a book that can be used at home, at school, or in the field. On a winter field trip or on a winter bird count, this would be a good book to have to discuss the wildlife, tracks, and signs encountered in the bush. It is a good introduction to winter wildlife for children.

Reviewed by *John Pollack*, Box 353, Whitewood, Saskatchewan. S0G 5C0

## WISDOM OF THE ELDERS

PETER KNUDTSON AND DAVID SUZUKI. 1992. Stoddart Publishing, Toronto. 232 pp. \$27.95.

The December 1993 issue of *Blue Jay* (51:207) carried a short quote from the famous Chief Seattle (Seeathl, really) "speech," which is reputed to have been delivered in 1854 in Washington State. After reading the note, I wrote Lynn Brown, *Blue Jay* editor, indicating that most of the famous "speech" has been shown to lack authenticity. The result of our exchange of correspondence is this book review and short essay on the Seeathl story.

Although I questioned the Seeathl "speech" when I first read it in the mid-1970s, it was not until I read Peter Knudtson and David Suzuki's book, *Wisdom of the Elders* that my suspicions about the "speech's" authenticity were confirmed. The authors explain that the Chief likely really did give "a speech of some sort between 1853 and 1855 somewhere in Washington Territory..." A Dr. Henry Smith apparently did make notes of the Chief's talk, after it was translated from his Lushotseed tongue into Chinook and then English. These notes were re-written in 1931, and again in 1969. The often-quoted version, however, was written in 1970 by Ted Perry for a screenplay, and it is this heavily dramatized version with clear inaccuracies that has become such a favourite of environmental and anthropological writers.

Perry apparently had no wish to have his screen script quoted as authentic, but he could not stop it because he had no copyright to it. Knudtson and Suzuki write that this unintentional hoax was exposed first by Robert Kaiser from Germany at

"the European Association for American Studies in Rome in 1984," but it received little publicity. So little, in fact, that the renowned anthropologist, David Maybury-Lewis, quotes from the phoney version in his otherwise impeccably researched and timely *Millennium: Tribal Wisdom and the Modern World*, 1992 (Viking, New York).

I should mention that the cause of my questioning the "speech's" authenticity the first time I read it relates to where it tells of the Chief watching passengers shoot bison from rail cars while travelling by train across the Great Plains. This prior to 1854? In fact, the United States railway system had not yet extended west of the Mississippi River by 1854, and the first transcontinental railway line was not completed until 1869.

So why did this unintentional hoax happen? I believe there are two root causes. One, identified by Knudtson and Suzuki, springs from the current environmental consciousness, the human desire to improve the world and to find early wisdom in this regard from among people who lived close to the land. The second cause is named myth development by Stephen Jay Gould, and is applicable in this problem of the cloned screenplay speech. This case clearly is reminiscent of Gould's "The Case of the Creeping Fox Terrier Clone," in *Bully for Brontosaurus*, 1991 (W.W. Norton, New York). The "fox terrier clone" is the science-perpetuated myth that ancient horse ancestors were of fox terrier size. Once stated in an old, 19th century palaeontological publication, this mistake was repeated over and over again from textbook to textbook to where it is still learned by students this very day! This is lazy "scholarship," sometimes

resulting in blind perpetuation and acceptance of fatuous falsehoods.

Having explained a major reason for this book review, now the review. Knudtson and Suzuki's main goals clearly are to draw attention to the need to apply the traditional environmental knowledge of hunting and gathering peoples, those closest to the land, to environmental management and to ecological science. There can be no question that this very well written and thoroughly researched cross-disciplinary book makes a strong case for such application to environmental management. The book establishes the truth about the great depth of environmental knowledge held by many indigenous hunters-gatherers. It is less successful in establishing the groundwork for using such knowledge to advance ecological science.

These strengths and weaknesses aside, *Wisdom of the Elders* is a fascinating collection and ecological interpretation of hunting and gathering adaptive strategies from around the world. Yes, the authors took advantage of a trend currently sweeping the realm of environmental management, which is to use indige-

nous traditional knowledge to augment the scientific principles of environmentally sound landscape management. In Canada, this trend is bearing fruit in "co-management" boards springing up in many places. Perhaps an unwritten goal of the book is to explore the cutting edge of a field of endeavour and to be seen to be doing this, and, if it is, Knudtson and Suzuki certainly succeed, although the central idea predates the book.

Small weaknesses aside, this is really an excellent book from most respects: writing, research, thoroughness, comprehensiveness, lucidity, organization, design, and printing. With regard to the major hope expressed in the book, that traditional knowledge be used to develop ecologically sound environment management strategies, the news is good — it is happening already. My only warning to readers is that, with regard to the expressed desire that traditional knowledge also should be highly useful in advancing ecological science, the jury is still out.

Reviewed by *Henry Epp*, 147 Green Meadow Road, Regina, Saskatchewan. S4V 0A7



According to a 1991 Environment Canada survey on "The importance of wildlife to Canadians":

4.1 million Canadians photographed wildlife;

2.4 million travelled to view waterfowl;

6.6 million purchased special feed for wildlife;

7.1 million maintained bird houses, plants and shrubs for wildlife; and

18.9 million (90.2% of the population) took part in one or more wildlife related activity, spending \$5.6 billion.