

THE GREAT BUTTERFLY HUNT - THE MYSTERY OF THE MIGRATING MONARCHS

ETHAN HERBERMAN. 1990. Simon and Schuster Books for Young Readers, New York. 48 pp. 21.5x25.3 cm. Illustrated in colour; 8 maps. Paperback. ISBN 0-671-69428-6. \$7.95

Perhaps it's an indication of second childhood, but this retiree found this book for young readers fascinating. The text is well written and there are more than 60 colour illustrations.

It's the story of the search for wintering Monarch butterflies one summer east of the Rockies, those concentrated

around the Great Lakes and in the north-eastern United States but also occurring uncommonly in the Prairie Provinces. It has long been known that Monarchs west of the mountains winter on the California coast.

Fred and Norah Urquhart of Toronto began studying Monarchs in 1935. In the early 1950's, they began sticking small tags on butterfly wings. They recruited volunteers across North America. Five teenagers from Ontario, Maryland, Texas, and Minnesota. and a biology teacher in Massachusetts made particularly notable contributions. The latter banded up to 2,000 Monarchs in a fall with the help of her dog, Nutmeg, who pointed out butterflies to her. By 1964,



Monarchs

J. Asai

70,000 monarchs had been banded across the continent and returns indicated the insects were headed for Mexico. Another 330,000 would be marked before the winter site was found, some 2,900 km from where the adults emerged.

The break that hastened the end of the hunt was a hail storm. Ken Brugger was driving near Mexico City in November 1973 when the storm brought thousands of migrating Monarchs down around him. He and his wife were hired by Urquhart to search full time. On 2 January 1975 they saw a single Monarch sailing down from Cerro Pelon – a 4,000 m mountain. They began climbing, taking a different route each day, until on the 16th day they found first wings, then bodies, and finally heard the whirring of thousands of butterflies as they fluttered at their tree perches. An estimated two hundred million Monarchs are now known to occupy nine fir-tree sites in Mexico – each about the size of a large city block and all within an area of 120 km by 56 km.

One prediction has this phenomenal migration becoming almost extinct in 20 years due to tree-cutting in Mexico, development in California and chemical spraying for weeds everywhere. Spraying kills milkweeds, the sole food plant of Monarch caterpillars.

There is much more in this book, e.g., raising Monarchs from eggs; differences between migratory and nonmigratory Monarchs; reasons, methods, hazards and rates of southward migration; the two-generation return trip; determining birthplaces through chemical analysis of adults; arranging guided tours to winter sites; and more. A best buy!

Reviewed by *Bernie Gollop*, 2202 York Avenue, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. S7J 1J1

THE NATURE FAKERS: WILDLIFE, SCIENCE AND SENTIMENT

RALPH H. LUTTS. 1990. Fulcrum Publishing, Golden, Co. 255 pp., Illus. photographs. Cloth. \$29.95.

The book deals with the public furor over the authenticity of popular animal stories of nearly a century ago. It is something I became acquainted with in stages over a period of many years extending back to my boyhood.

As a teenager on a farm in the late 1940's, I gloried in the stories of Ernest Thompson Seton and Charles G. D. Roberts in our country-school readers. Although I had nature all about me, I liked to read about it too and wished that our meagre school "library" had more books by naturalists. I did not know of any nature magazine which might have filled the void and consequently subscribed to *Sports Afield*, a hunting and fishing magazine. It regularly ran articles by naturalists, and so I first read Dr. William J. Long. The editor introduced him as "one of America's foremost living naturalists." He did a series of articles on different animals – deer, moose, fox, and others – written from his close, wide-ranging observations in the field. These articles were well received by the readers, outdoorsmen themselves, who wrote in to say that Long knew what he was talking about.

A few years later, while still a teenager, I began my own teaching in a country school, and there in its meagre "library" was a book by Long, *Ways of the Wood Folk*, published in 1899. Could this be the same person? Indeed it was, for Long's prolific and varied writing career extended for more than half a century. The stories in *Wood Folk*, Long's first nature book, exuded an aura of wilderness and instilled in the reader a caring for wildlife and a feeling of

kinship with it. What I did not know was that some of Long's succeeding nature books, written just a few years later, would embroil him and like writers in much controversy, making newspaper headlines across the United States and involving even the country's president.

All this is detailed in Lutt's book, *The Nature Fakers*, a balanced investigation of the whole affair, giving not only the specifics of the debate itself, but also background of environmental awakening at the turn of the century which spawned the controversy. As the dust jacket affirms: "Ultimately, the dialogue set a new standard of accuracy for the responsible nature writer and reflected a new way of thinking about animals and our moral responsibilities to wildlife." Readers of *Blue Jay* will find this book worthwhile because the background concerns are still with us, with our present-day interest in ecology.

Canadian writers, Seton and to a lesser extent Roberts, figured in the controversy too, as did Jack London, whose classic *Call of the Wild* was set in the Canadian north. Long himself spent a few months each year in the Canadian wilds, right up to his death in 1952. Earlier in his career he had conducted a study of wolves for the Canadian government.

In my own career, meanwhile, I gained further awareness of the principals of the debate. In a university Canadian Literature course, I chose to write an essay on Robert's animal stories, and later when revising it for publication, I read John Burrough's famous *Atlantic Monthly* article of 1903 on nature writers, "Real and Sham Natural History." This was the opening salvo of the controversy, for in it, Burroughs, the dean of American naturalists then, attacked writers like Long and Seton for padding their seemingly "true" accounts with incredible incidents or making up unreal episodes – that is, 49(3). September 1991

being "nature fakers" rather than real naturalists. Would a fox really ride a sheep to safety, as Seton claimed? Do animals really tutor their young in survival skills, as Long stated?

Long rose to his defence, and the media of the time, in editorials and cartoons, had a heyday with the affair. Even President Theodore Roosevelt joined the debate. Roosevelt was a noted hunter-outdoorsman and writer of his exploits. The president sided with Burroughs in the controversy, and in the course of four years managed effectively to discredit Long.

In *The Nature Fakers*, Lutts shows that there was simply more than just an attempt by Burroughs and Roosevelt to establish scientific accuracy in nature writing. Burroughs could be a petty individual. He criticized some poets for "falsely" describing two plants as blooming at the same time (as it turned out, they did bloom together but only not at Burrough's home). His enmity toward Long, seemingly, also stemmed from the fact that Long's nature books were widely outselling his own. As for Roosevelt, he was motivated by the fact that Long's sympathetic treatment of nature was engendering a public empathy that was at odds with Roosevelt's own pursuit of the sporting life. Long, nonetheless, needed some reprimand, Lutts finds, for his stories did have lapses in natural history, his observations coloured at times by wishful interpretation.

From our perspective the controversy was at once heated, dramatic, bizarre, ironic, even humorous, all of which makes for entertaining reading. This "War of the Naturalists" – fought on the printed page among such diverse personalities as Long, Roosevelt, Seton, Roberts, and London – is thoroughly documented in Lutt's book with 33 pages of endnotes and with abundant pen-and-ink drawings and cartoons of the day. Altogether, this is handsome

book, profoundly written by a knowledgeable author. Dr. Lutts is Adjunct Associate Professor of Environmental Studies at Hampshire College, Amherst, Massachusetts.

Reviewed by *Victor C. Friesen*, Box 65, Rosthern, Saskatchewan. S0K 3R0

FROM THE LAND OF SHADOWS – THE MAKING OF GREY OWL

DONALD B. SMITH. 1990. Western Producer Prairie Books, Saskatoon. 320 pp. including end notes (71 pp.), (18.5 x 28 cm), 59 b/w photos, 3 maps. Hardcover. \$24.95

This book is the manifestation of Donald Smith's 20-year fascination with the life and works of Archiebald Belaney, better known today and in the literary and conservation circles of the 1930s, as Grey Owl.

This is a thoroughly researched and scholarly work. Initially, I hesitated with this assessment wondering if it might frighten off readers, but this is no dry piece of history in the telling. The author maintains a dynamic tone reminiscent of his subject's life and balances this with a sensitive, yet not syrupy, treatment of the biography.

Newcomers to the Grey Owl story may be frustrated by the level of detail as they excitedly read through the chronicling of his private life and personal travails. Though there are points where Smith's details slow the narrative down, overall this is not a dry biographical work at all.

Even casual readers of Grey Owl will find the minutia fascinating and very entertaining reading. Where others have produced sketches of Grey Owl's life, Smith fills in the picture with plenty of vibrant colour provided by his subject's real-life experiences.

One of the most important additions or "fleshing outs" of the Grey Owl biography made by the author is the recognition of the importance of Grey Owl's somewhat forgotten wives (with the usual exception of Anahareo) and children. Smith draws attention to the influence that Angele Egwuna had upon Archie as his first bride. In doing so he makes up for the understatement of her importance by other biographers.

Thanks to Angele's patience, Grey Owl advanced his knowledge of the Ojibwa tongue. She taught him basic woodlore and how to survive in the bush. These skills marked his change from English school boy to Canadian backwoodsman and "half-breed."

We also learn more about Grey Owl's three children, and his relationship with them, than in any other work thus far. Indeed, Smith acknowledges Grey Owl's offspring on the book's dedication page where he has written "To Agnes and in memory of Dawn and Johnny."

Much of Smith's behind-the-scenes picture of Grey Owl is based on information from archives, notably Grey Owl's "precious notebooks" and personal memoirs of those close to him. Some of these wonderful insights into "the making of Grey Owl" come from the diary of Betty Somervell. Summey, as friends knew her, accompanied Grey Owl as chauffeur on an English lecture tour and as an escort to the "tired and ill" author shipboard to Toronto.

As Smith points out it was indeed fortunate that she kept a diary during the three week trans-Atlantic crossing. Her observations and later comments are enlightening, for, as she wrote, "Some people thought he was a saint, and others thought he was a wild man of the woods; I think he was some of each with a few more rolled in, like most people."

Donald Smith makes appropriate
Blue Jay

thanks to one of the readers of his draft, namely Phil Chester. If I interpret the end notes correctly, Mr. Chester contributed some superb observations and insights which the author relates. For instance, when commenting on Grey Owl's writing style he says it was "full of compound-complex sentences of Dickensian proportions ... his love of foreign expressions and latinized English, all hint at his upper middle-class background."

Another apt description by Chester reads: "Essentially Grey Owl was a storyteller, an entertainer who appropriated the right to alter his material for the purposes of comic relief or dramatic effect... A brilliant popularizer he believed that he must entertain his readers as well as inform them. He would be true to general impressions, if not to minute or exact detail."

And once again from the diary of Betty Somervell, a quote, one which touches gently on the ambivalence of both Grey Owl's private and public life as well as upon his masquerade and conservation endeavour. It unites the man's plight or position, however one chooses to refer to it. "Down the avenue of trees, I see a spot of sunlight. I am trying so hard to get there."

We learn more of the roots of his Indian appellation and of his "close call" with exposure of his true identity. Readers will gain an appreciation of the tremendous internal struggle he waged, being either unprepared or incapable of revealing his true background even to women for whom he possessed genuine affection.

Part of chapter sixteen, "The Greatest Triumph," deals with Grey Owl's meeting with the English monarchy on his second tour overseas. His lecture and film concluded, he was invited to meet the royal family. If Grey Owl did not feel this encounter to be one of his

"greatest triumphs" then possibly his meeting a few days later with his aunts was the peak of his endeavour.

In returning to his home town, Grey Owl must have known something like this might happen [a reference to some local residents who recognized Grey Owl as Archie of Hastings]. If so, he must have weighed the risks against the joys of seeing his aunts once again. More than anything he wanted them to see him once again at the height of his fame...

As a boy Archie always tried to please his aunts. He had first begun to tell stories to them and now forty years later had fully perfected the art. He wanted to impress them... He had bettered the record of his grandfather and namesake, Archibald Belaney ... he had actually met the reigning monarchs... He had given his talk in the very room that contained their thrones and the State Throne of Queen Victoria, upholstered in crimson and gold. To prove to these ladies that he had made something of himself was the greatest triumph of his life.

From the Land of Shadows is not the first book to which I would send a reader who is looking for an initial exposure to the tale of Grey Owl – Englishman come Indian, trapper come animal conservationist and protector. It is, however, the book I would encourage someone to read if they are seeking to better know the intricacies of the man's personal transformation and professional accomplishments.

Reviewed by *Bradley Muir*, Box 212, Waskesiu Lake, Saskatchewan. S0J 2Y0



BLUE JAY BOOKSHOP MANAGER REQUIRED

Don McRobbie wishes to resign as Blue Jay Bookshop manager and, therefore, we are looking for someone to take over the position. The job entails the ordering and selling of books. About half of the selling is by mail and the remainder at the provincial spring and fall meets, as well as at occasional meetings of local societies. The space required to store the books is about one wall – 12 ± ft. of bookcases (supplied by the Society) and the time about the equivalent of one day per week. The manager receives 40% of the net profits. For someone interested in natural history books and wanting to make a significant contribution to SNHS, this is a great opportunity.

If you wish to discuss the position with Don, his number is 242-8549 in Saskatoon. If you are interested in the job, please contact Curt Schroeder, SNHS Executive Director, in Regina at 780-9273. The bookshop is a major service to its members. We hope that someone is willing to give it a try.

SOLITUDES EPISODE THREE: SEASONS IN BEAVER COUNTRY

Video produced by DAN GIBSON and GORDON GIBSON. Length: 30 minutes.

International award winner in film making and sound tracks recording, Dan Gibson has produced *Seasons in Beaver Country*, a nature video without narration or music. The video is made for those who wish to relax, unwind or just view scenery and wildlife. With no narration the identity of the more than 20 animals that float, fly and walk by or squawk in the background are left up to the viewers' discretion.

The four seasons are covered quite well from blooming flowers to falling leaves to snowfalls and frozen lakes, then to the thaw again.

The colour and contrast are quite good, although I felt that too much time was spent watching the reflection of coloured leaves in rippling water.

If you are looking for a video that is

relaxing and the sound of moving water pleases you, you will like *Seasons in Beaver Country*. If you are like me, and want or need someone to explain what you are looking at or listening to, this video is not for you.

Reviewed by *Carman Dodge*, Box 1933, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. S6V 6J9

HAWKS, EAGLES AND FALCONS OF NORTH AMERICA

PAUL A. JOHNSGARD. 1990. Smithsonian Institute Press, Washington, D.C. 403 + xvi pp. + 30 pages of colour plates. \$45.00 (U.S.)

A wealth of useful information fills this readable and informative summary of the diurnal raptors of North America. Have you ever wondered why the long wings of the Northern Harrier are held in steep dihedral? – to maintain maximum stability during low-altitude flights. Or why it has such long legs? – because it is the only ground-nesting hawk in North America. Or why it has owl-like facial disc and very large ear openings? – so it can locate prey by sound alone, as

Blue Jay



Ferruginous Hawk

Wayne Lynch

owls often do. The harrier is only one of the 31 species of North American diurnal raptors with highly specialized anatomy and physiology for its unique niche.

Johnsgard in his first five chapters discusses the comparative biology of diurnal raptors and provides seven useful tables which represent the weight, size of home range, nesting dates, incubation and fledgling period, reproductive success, population size and mortality rate for each species.

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The remainder of the book is devoted to accounts of individual species, with a full-page distribution map for each, depicting the average number of that species seen per Christmas bird count in every state and province in 1986, a welcome feature.

At the top of the food chain, raptor declines warn us of dangerous chemicals in our environment and of habitat destruction. The DDT-dieldrin era resulted in decreasing numbers of six species, the Osprey, Bald Eagle, Sharpshinned and Cooper's hawks, Merlin and Peregrine Falcon, with the Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon virtually extirpated as breeding species from the eastern half of this continent, whereas the Osprey showed widespread breeding failure. Johnsgard details and usually explains the declines of another 13 of the remaining 25 species, including in Canada the

Red-shouldered Hawk, Swainson's Hawk, and Ferruginous Hawk. In addition, our most common raptor, the American Kestrel, is declining in Florida. Clearly, increasing attention must be paid to breeding success and population status of each raptor species.

Reviewed by *C. Stuart Houston*, 863 University Drive, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. S7N 0J8

BIRD FLIGHT

ROBERT BURTON. 1990. *Facts on File*. New York, Oxford, Sydney. 160 pp., illus. colour, diagrams. Hard cover. \$31.95

We who belong to the earth-bound species *Homo sapiens* are fascinated by flight. To a large extent, that is why birds attract us. Yet, for all the work that



White Pelicans

J. Pulson

has been done in aerodynamics, we still know little about some aspects of bird flight. Unlike the fixed wings of aeroplanes, the bird's wing has an amazing flexibility. This book by zoologist Robert Burton helps the layman to understand the maneuverability and complexity of bird flight. In the foreword, no less prestigious a person than the Director of the Edward Grey Institute of Field Ornithology at Oxford assures us that this book makes accessible to the general reader – in jargon-free form – what is tucked away in the scientific literature. Then, in his final remark, he identifies what will be the chief attraction of *Bird Flight* for many of us: "Even if you choose to avoid the text – and you shouldn't – the striking collection of photographs of birds in flight is something one can look through again and again."

The photographs, by distinguished wildlife photographers, are all in colour. There are very few pages without photographs, and many have been given a full page or more. They have been chosen for their artistic excellence as well as their

illustrative function – they would make a magnificent album of bird photography. Regrettably, they lose something of their aesthetic effectiveness when sharing pages with closely-printed text.

The text takes up less space than the photographs, but it is crowded with information and examples of flight behaviour, many from Burton's personal observations of birds in the Arctic, Antarctic, Africa, and Asia, not to mention his own garden birds. Occasionally, the example is a literary one, like Shelley's skylark or Topsell's *Fowles of Heaven*. There are also diagrams of different flight mechanisms. The five chapters cover how flight evolved, the basic principles of bird flight, flying skills, style of flight, and what is involved in living in the air. Finally, there is a list of English and scientific names used in the text, references for further reading, and an index.

Reviewed by *Margaret Belcher*, Box 7, Dilke, Saskatchewan. S0G 1C0



Canada Geese

Fred W. Lahrman