

THE PRAIRIE WORLD

DAVID COSTELLO, 1980. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, Minnesota, U.S.A. 244 pp. Paper \$6.95.

(This is a new edition of the book originally published in 1969.)

David Costello's *The Prairie World* is the product of a life-long fascination with the prairie landscape. His love of the prairies began when he was a boy growing up on a farm in Nebraska and continued into his professional career. His book is a classic study of the prairie biome, packed with information about the ways and wiles of the prairie's flora and fauna.

Intriguing tidbits of natural history fill the pages and stay fresh in the reader's mind: a tenacious clump of coneflowers thriving for 17 consecutive years; a determined hunting wasp standing guard over a spider captured as a "nursery" for her eggs; diligent harvester ants scrupulously sorting and storing seeds in their manicured mounds.

But the book is more than a collection of interesting details. As Costello notes in his introduction, the book is also about relationships - how it all fits together. As the chapters unfold, one is increasingly impressed by the interrelationships of all living things on the prairies - an incredibly diverse and durable landscape.

Costello begins with the prairie's

geological pasts and looks back to the original tall grass prairie to illustrate how this landscape was able to renew itself for thousands of years:

"It may seem paradoxical that disturbances of the prairie by digging animals, floods, fire and even local overgrazing were essential to maintenance of the fully developed prairie itself. Close examination of luxuriant grassland will usually show that here and there all the plants that become conspicuous during succession actually persist on the prairies at all times. They are able to sustain themselves in suitable micro-habitats made by gopher mounds, badger diggings, anthills, drifted soil, and abandoned mouse runways If there had never been disturbance on the prairie, then competition from all the final-stage plants would have killed the annuals, the invaders, and the intermediate-stage plants, leaving nothing to renew the prairie when catastrophe finally happened. When we see harvester ants, ground squirrels, and other disturbers of the soil, we should thank them for cultivating spots where lesser plants can persist in readiness to renew the land in time of need."

The book, then, gives one an excellent overview of the interlocking ecosystems of the prairie landscape. In addition, successive chapters focus on specific species of mammals, birds, herptiles and insects, emphasizing their ingenious strategies for survival in a demanding environment. Once again the author's personal accounts frequently enliven his descriptions.

In his final chapter, David Costello explores the changing relationship of

man to the prairies, leaving the reader to ponder how long the landscape itself will continue to survive:

"Thus man believes he has met the challenge of the grasslands after one hundred and fifty years of strenuous attempts at settlement. Will the remaining portions of prairie disappear if he can achieve the fullest potential of the contribution it can make to mankind? Will he be able to meet the caprices of nature in the artificial habitat he has established where once the earth thundered with the pounding feet of countless bison and the sky rang with the clarion calls of geese and the whooping of the great cranes? Only time will tell."

Reviewed by *Suzanne Henry*,
Waskesiu Lake, Saskatchewan. S0J
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HERBS IN ONTARIO

CHARLOTTE ERICHSEN-BROWN.
1975, Breezy Creeks Press, Aurora,
Ontario. 37 pp. Softcover \$2.00.

Herbs in Ontario includes descriptions of 54 different herbs. Each description covers the type of soils preferred, seeding instructions, growing in pots, harvesting instructions and use of the final product. Latin names for each herb are included. There is a bibliography and a list of sources for seeds and plants.

SURVEY OF CANADIAN HERBARIA

BERNARD BOIVIN. 1980. *Provancheria*
No. 10, *Memoire de l'Herbier Louis-
Marie*, Faculté des Sciences de Agri-
culture et de l'Alimentation, Université
Laval, Quebec. 187 pp. Softcover
\$10.00

This book contains brief descriptions of about 410 Canadian herbaria. Each herbarium description includes acronym (recognized abbreviation for that herbarium), address, history and size of collection, main collectors, publications based on each collection, and sources of information. Besides this there are sections dealing with a history of herbaria surveys, statistical tables, reproduction of a few historical texts and a list of references. An index is included.

PLANTS OF QUETICO AND THE ONTARIO SHIELD

SHAN WALSH. 1980. University of To-
ronto Press, Toronto, Ontario. 152 pp.
Cloth \$25.00; paper \$7.95.

Quetico Provincial Park is located in northwestern Ontario along the international boundary between Fort Francis and Thunder Bay. The book begins with a general introduction to the area including a section on "the vegetation of Quetico in a provincial, regional and local context." Following this are 68 pages of color photographs of 194 of the 658 species found in the park. These photographs are arranged by habitat. The sections are 1) lake, marsh and shore 2) floodplains 3) forest 4) bogs and 5) lime rich areas. Following the

color section is an annotated checklist of the plants of the park.

The introductory material is very brief, containing very little information on the park. The photographs which supposedly are to assist in identifying the species do not do the job. Many of the pictures are very poor (i.e. too dark—white-flowered pyrola p. 36; out of focus—forest horsetail p. 38; too small or distant—sweet gale p. 6—these are merely examples of many presenting these problems). Poor color rendition is prevalent throughout. For example the photo of Marsh Bellflower shows a bright blue flower where the flowers are normally white or at most a very faint blue, or the lemon-yellow flowers on Mountain Maple which are normally white.

There are problems with the annotated list as well. The names used for the plants appear to follow Britton and Brown's Illustrated Flora and consequently do not correspond with today's manuals. Also some of the common names have to be unique to this publication and may never be seen elsewhere (i.e. Narrow-branched ground-cedar clubmoss, Fruit of the mud rush and Edward Tuckerman's sedge).

The list does contain considerable comment on medicinal uses of plants. Although this is interesting I question its values in a checklist for a wilderness area. How would it look if the Maiden-hair Spleenwort, listed as rare, were to be wiped out by people hoping "to keep hair from falling out and restore it!"

The color photograph section wastes about 50% of the usable space and the poor quality of the pictures are a major drawback in a book where they should be the major attraction. Although the concept of the book is a good one I question the value of this particular publication. — Reviewed by *Wayne C. Harris*, Box 414, Raymore, Saskatchewan. S0A 3J0

ONTARIO BIRDS: Journal of the Ontario Field Ornithologists

Edited by: CHIP and LINDA WESELOH.
Volume 1 Number 1, April 1983, 40 pp.
Membership \$10.00/year which includes
newsletter and Ontario Birds. Ontario
Field Ornithologists, P.O. Box 1204, Sta-
tion B, Burlington, Ontario. L7P 3S9

The Ontario Field Ornithologists formed in 1982 and this is the first issue of their journal. Volume 1 Number 1 of *Ontario Birds* contains the following articles: Ontario Bird Records Committee Report for 1982; A record of the Yellow-throated Warbler from Moosonee; Field Identification of Shrikes; A birding site guide to Thickson's Woods, Whitby; A bibliography of ornithology for Oxford County, Ontario; Probable nest construction by Great Horned Owls. In addition there are five notes included, on Boreal Owls feeding on flying squirrels, the first Painted Bunting in Ontario, hummingbird migration, breeding birds of Prince Edward County and fall courtship flight of American Woodcock. There is one book review and a section on Ontario Field Ornithologists' announcements. The overall quality (articles, layout, printing) of *Ontario Birds* is excellent.

One might ask what relevance does an Ontario bird journal have to Saskatchewan birders, but considering the fact that the shrikes of Ontario are exactly the same as those here, that excellent article is certainly applicable here. And do Boreal Owls feed on Flying Squirrels in Saskatchewan? The magazine is excellent, applicable to some extent to Saskatchewan, and recommended! — Reviewed by *Wayne C. Harris*, Box 414, Raymore, Saskatchewan. S0A 3J0

JUST BATS

M. BROCK FENTON. 1983. University of Toronto Press, x + 165 pp. Clothbound \$25.00, Paper \$10.00.

Bats are the world's second most common and diverse group of mammals (behind rodents). They are also the most misunderstood of mammals, and the mention of bats is enough to make people feel uncomfortable.

Brock Fenton, a professor at Carleton University in Ottawa and an internationally recognized authority on bats, has written an exciting book, one in which his delight in his work shines through. The book is aimed at the general reader and gives a good sense of how bats live, and why they should interest scientists and the public at large.

There are chapters on flight, echolocation, seeing and smelling, diet, energy and survival, roosts, activity, migration and navigation, behaviour, public health, keeping bats out, and conservation. The book's organization struck me as effective: Fenton has broken bat biology into chunks that are smaller than usual, but the scheme emphasizes bats' unique set of specializations, and there is little repetition of information.

Just Bats is particularly strong on basic explanation of bat biology, and does not assume prior knowledge on the reader's part. Scientific jargon has been kept to a minimum. Drawings and photographs are appropriate, are of outstanding quality, and are excellently printed. This book is the first that I have come across that gives such a thorough account of bats' natural history.

But what makes Fenton's book really special is his inclusion of recent

advances in knowledge, highlighted by anecdotes from his own research. Not only does this information add insights into science for the general reader, but it also creates an ideal book for the non-specialist scientist.

I am not surprised that Fenton has written a book of this calibre; his fascination with bats goes back a long way. We roomed together as students for two years, and he managed to pass an interest in bats to me. Not so with all who drifted in and out of our batty household - a Britisher who lived with us for a while disliked bats intensely, and got an awful shock one night when he opened a foil package in the freezer, expecting to find kidney for pie. Inside was one of Brock's bats, a little brown destined for further inspection.

I am glad that *Just Bats* is available, and I wholeheartedly recommend it to *Blue Jay* readers — Reviewed by *John E. Storer*, Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, Regina, Saskatchewan. S4P 3V7



Silver-haired Bat.

W. C. Harris