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SASKATCHEWAN COUGAR — ELUSIVE CAT

TOM WHITE, 1982. Special Publication No. 14, Saskatchewan Natural History Society, Box 1121, Regina, Saskatchewan, S4P 3B4. 80 pp. Paper \$5.00.

This publication, the first Special Publication of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society to concentrate on a single species, is of interest primarily for its preservation of records of Cougar sightings.

After a brief introduction, the Cougar, Bobcat and Lynx are described. Details on the Cougar's life history follow a description of the animal. Brief descriptions of the Bobcat and Lynx follow. This section would have benefited from a clearly marked comparison of the distinguishing characteristics of each in the field. This information is sometimes given in other sections. For example, the differences in locomotion are described later when dealing with assessing the validity of reports.

The problems of assessing reports, historical records of Cougars in the Americas, Cougar habitat and movements in Saskatchewan, and tracks and kills are then considered.

The remainder of the booklet deals with Saskatchewan Cougar records of specimens, tracks and sightings. The province has been divided into seven regions for which reports are listed. The reasons for dividing the area into these particular regions is not stated. The reports are numbered and represent 139 localities, with more than one report from over one-third of the localities. Lower case letters follow the numbers

where more than one record is given for a locality. This section is the most valuable part of the book, since it preserves records that could easily have been lost or never have come to light. In some cases the reports are a direct quote of the person who made the observations, while in others they are paraphrased. The use of quotation marks would have clearly distinguished between the two.

A map shows the location of the reports by number. Where a number occurs more than once on the map (e.g. 131) with some distance between the points, a letter designation would have helped pinpoint the site of the specific report. Symbols with the numbers to indicate records of specimens, tracks or sightings would, I feel, have added considerably to the value of the map.

White is to be congratulated for tracking down and recording the numerous reports. They add immeasurably to our knowledge of the distribution of the Cougar. — Reviewed by *W. Harvey Beck*, Box 458, Gleichen, Alberta. T0J 1N0

WILD GREEN VEGETABLES OF CANADA

ADAM F. SZCZAWINSKI and N. J. TURNER. 1980. National Museum of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario. 179 pp. Coil bound \$9.95.

Another in the well-received "Edible Wild Plants of Canada" series, this work maintains the format, quality and interest

of the previous volumes. Companion volumes have been reviewed in the *Blue Jay* Vol. 37 No. 2 (June 1979) and Vol. 37 No. 4 (December 1979).

The book is well-organized and researched, with preface, introduction, glossary and index set-off from the main body of the text through the use of different paper colour.

The introduction gives the nutritive value of some wild vegetables and cautions with regard to proper identification, warning of the toxicity of certain species. It does not, however, make a strong enough case against the dangers of overharvesting rare or uncommon species.

In the main text the possibilities of using wild greens as survival food or gourmet fare are explored. Notes on recognition, distribution, habitat and uses (including recipes) are given along with line drawings or photographs of each of the 25 species or groups. Discussed are sea vegetables, lichens, ostrich fern and flowering plants like cat-tail, cow parsnip, prickly pear cactus and fireweed.

Nearly half of the species or groups described do not occur in Saskatchewan as the authors have chosen plants from a variety of habitats across Canada. Their attention to northern and coastal species is intended to benefit "people living in (these) areas, where domesticated vegetables, if available at all, are difficult to grow and expensive to buy."

A few of the recipes and preparations are cumbersome and involved but they provide most interesting sidelights on traditional use by natives and European explorers.

This book admits to not being an exhaustive list of edible wild greens but it does provide a strong starting point for readers interested in the subject. However, readers should also have access to other reference works, to

enable them, for example to gather and prepare the lichens or kelps for safe consumption. As mentioned for earlier volumes in this series, those unfamiliar with wild plants will also need a knowledgeable friend to obtain the best results in identifying and using them. — Reviewed by *Bradley J. Muir*, Waskesiu Lake, Saskatchewan. S0J 2Y0

THE AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES OF MANITOBA.

WILLIAM B. PRESTON. 1982. Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, Winnipeg, Manitoba. 128 pp. Illus. Paper \$9.95.

Manitoba is richer for the publication late last year of this account of some of its lesser known creatures. A clear writing style, occasionally enhanced with personal anecdotes, makes this slim volume interesting reading for either the experienced novice or professional herpetologist.

The introduction includes an excellent explanation of scientific naming, of what amphibians and reptiles are, and how Manitoba suits them as a place to live. Brief descriptions of historical herpetology and amphibians and reptiles in Indian lore are followed by notes on conversation and techniques for specimen preservation. Keys to tadpoles and amphibian eggs, detailed descriptions and colour photographs of each species plus maps of their Manitoba range round out the book.

Particularly well presented is the explanation of the often confusing system of scientific names. This is supplemented by a careful positioning of each family as it is introduced in the species write-ups. The author takes a firm stand on several questions still debated in the scientific community,

e.g. whether to assign Manitoba's two toads to subspecies or full species; whether any species of earthworms are indigenous to Manitoba (the inference on page 81 is that there are none).

Although this is an account of herpetology in Manitoba, occasionally references are made to studies in other areas and more pertinent Manitoba studies are overlooked. For instance, the description of the diets of Tiger Salamander larvae in Colorado could have been supplemented by the results of a Manitoba study which identified *Gammarus* as an exclusive food item for this species for much of the summer.¹ Similarly, the mention of transformation dates for Canadian Toads in Minnesota is interesting, but the same observations at Delta, Manitoba are more relevant.³ A second paper by that writer records Manitoba Boreal Chorus Frogs in Manitoba calling in March, slightly earlier than reported in this book.²

The author's very careful and concise presentation of a great deal of information occasionally leaves the reader wanting more. For instance, the detailed description of the historic significance of reptiles and amphibians to Indians could have been extended to include their present significance, both to Indians and others, as reflected in the commercial harvest of frogs and snakes. This omission leaves part of the notes about animal collecting laws curiously unexplained. Later in the book the Red-sided Garter Snake, Manitoba's most intensively studied reptile, receives only a brief treatment in the text and literature cited, despite the numerous scientific papers and theses that have been written about it.

The book is attractively presented, in no small measure due to the author's exceptional photographs. These are placed with the species write-ups rather than grouped together — more expen-

sive perhaps, but so much easier to use. One might wish for a bit more open space in the text and criticize the layout artist who sometimes contrives to put the species heading at the bottom of one page with the write-up on the page following, yet these minor design problems detract little from a very handsome and well-bound volume.

Only the map section is disappointing. The usefulness of the maps would be increased if they displayed fewer rivers and lakes in favour of more towns for orientation. An indication of scale would be helpful to an out-of-province person, as would locating on the biome map the sites of the 12 habitat photographs.

The Amphibians and Reptiles of Manitoba is a valuable reference for anyone interested in Canadian herpetology. The author's easy writing style and his outstanding photographs also make it an attractive acquisition for armchair naturalists and a moderately-priced gift for anyone who might enjoy finding out more about these often little-known animals.

¹ OLENICK, ROBERTA J. and JOHN H. GEE. 1981. Tiger salamanders (*Ambystoma tigrinum*) and stocked rainbow trout (*Salmo gairdneri*): potential competitors for food in Manitoba prairie pothole lakes. *Canadian Field-Naturalist* 95(2):129-132.

² TAMSITT, JAMES R. 1961. Notes on the herpetofauna of the Delta Marsh of Lake Manitoba, Canada. *Canadian Field-Naturalist* 75(3):149-151.

³ TAMSITT, JAMES R. 1962. Notes on a population of the Manitoba toad (*Bufo hemiophrys*) in the Delta Marsh region of Lake Manitoba, Canada. *Ecology* 43(1):147-150.

— Reviewed by Carol A. Scott, 87 Woodgreen Place, Winnipeg, Manitoba. R3J 1H4.