mote birding. The reader is introduced to a variety of birds and a variety of birders following the colourful pages of anecdotes, life histories and illustrated birds.

The book does not try to describe all of the birds which regularly visit the maritime provinces of Canada. It is not a field guide to all birds. It is a book for bird-watchers and conservationists and introduces the reader to several birds, each of the sea, the coast, the shore, freshwater, the forest, agricultural lands, and finally towns and gardens, in that order. The book is divided into the seven sections named above with an introduction to each section and ending comment introducing birders amateur and professional studying within each of the sections and involved in the stewardship of habitat. Three to seven birds are described in some detail in each section. The description includes anecdotal stories of the birds, their habitats, origins of their common name, behaviour, nesting and egg-laying behaviours and chick hatching and rearing behaviour. Whether one is ready to brave the wind and waves to spot birds, or maybe just sit in an armchair by the window, the text leads you to appreciate the diversity of birds present in the Maritime Provinces and the possibilities of discovering or re-acquaintance with species which have always been present and probably have been visible many times.

Conservation is one important focus of the book and the end of each chapter gives some detail on the work of amateurs and professionals who research, monitor, and care for the different populations of each bird species mentioned. Throughout Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland, many different bird populations are in decline, especially but not exclusively, species mentioned in the book. Different programs are in place to monitor and conserve lands inhabited by these birds, and programs are being developed to make the public aware of the trends in bird populations. This book is one of those awareness projects.

I read the book quickly and then went back over the chapters more slowly to savour the stories of birds I know and the birds mentioned which I would like to see one day. It is an exciting book for a part-time birder and one which taught me not just about the birds but even more about the state of the shoreline, the wetlands, the forests and the agricultural fields. To the visitor, the land changes little, but to the resident, there are problems and potential solutions. The solution is often awareness and information. I applaud the researchers for their work and Merritt Gibson for bringing it together. The book also serves as a delightful picture book illustrated by Twilia Robar-DeCoste with drawings of birds, birds in their natural settings, landscapes and seascapes to show perspective and the beauty involved in the study and enjoyment of birding on Canada's East Coast.

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Ladybugs of Alberta: Finding the Spots and Connecting the Dots

By John Acorn. 2007. University of Alberta Press, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. 169 pages. $29.95.

This is an important book about insects for naturalists. It has field credibility. Acorn reviewed and understands the writings of the experts on lady beetle identification and ecology in North America. Acorn studied the specimens that collectors in Alberta deposited in collections. But most importantly, he was in the field in Alberta chasing and watching and photographing lady beetles. The result is a guide, written by an expert, which will be valuable before someone starts chasing lady beetles and will continue to provide insights as a person's expertise grows. And it is accessible; virtually anyone will be able to use it.

What can you do with this book? First and foremost it is possible to identify the lady beetles (a.k.a. ladybugs, ladybird beetles, Coccinellidae) that live in Alberta. The combination of excellent colour drawings, photographs, plus key features highlighted in text make it possible. In addition the range maps, both range in Alberta and much of North America, notes on food and habitat preferences give some guidance, to reduce the probability of an embarrassing misidentification. The difficult identifications are not glossed over. The necessity of dissecting genitalia to distinguish some *Hippodamia* (e.g., *glacialis* and *quinquesignata*) and the significance of chromosomal differences between *Chilocorus stigma* and *C. hexacyclus* are covered clearly, with humour and insight.

Most authors would have taken the easy route and restricted themselves to the big showy lady beetles with which most naturalists are familiar. However Acorn tackled the "lesser ladybugs", a daunting task to make what is known about *Scymnus* and *Hyperaspis* and *Brumoides* widely available, including both features that make species level identifications possible and some natural history. Acorn deserves credit for persevering and including the lesser species, especially considering the extra work, almost double the number of species, and that they are not as charismatic to general naturalists and that little is known about them. He engenders interest in these little beetles.

In addition to identification and species accounts, there are substantial sections on ecology, behaviour, and history of coccinellid study in Alberta. The hot topic of the influence of introduced species on native species is attacked head on. It starts with a perceptive critique of the functionally useless Nature Canada attempt to coordinate a citizen science project on lady beetles in the 1990s. His says that a prejudgment, introduced species are bad, led to many of the problems. In my view, the other key problem was that there was little or no quality control that compromised the value

of the data. What was needed was Acorn's book, or listening to field entomologists, during the planning process. The discussion continues with an assessment of the Evans' hypothesis that native species have constricted their range to ancestral habitats, that is have become less common in extensively human altered habitats (farmland and suburbia) after the arrival of introduced species such as the seven-spotted lady beetle. Refreshingly, he is able to present his own data to support his views. His views about ecological change, conservation and invasion biology are clear, logical and worthy of discussion.

The style deserves special mention. It is highly credible, yet at the same time there is a breath of whimsy and fireside chattiness. A fine example is the description of taste-testing. You will not look at a brightly coloured lady beetle the same after you read this.

What bothered me during my initial readings? The first was that I wanted more detail, more data. But, this is a book for generalists and not the appropriate place for the level of detail I want. Second were those couplets. Each species account includes a quirky, rhyming couplet. I did not understand many at first, but they did grow on me. Perhaps they are like beer, an acquired taste. Third were the common names. The Entomological Society of Canada is working to provide consistent, standard common names for insects, just like we have for birds. However, many were ignored, for example *Mulsantina picta* here is the Painted Ladybug, not pine lady beetle. However, some of the newly coined names hit the nail on the head and deserve to be maintained. My favourite was the Once-squashed Ladybug, a cryptic species in the same genus as the Twice-stabbed Ladybug. Yes, it needs to be squashed on a microscope slide to examine its chromosomes in order to be identified. Brilliant. These are minor complaints. The identification sections are worth the whole price of the book. The discussion of introduced species is worth the whole price of the book. The description of how to taste a ladybug to assess its palatability is worth the whole price of the book.

Our understanding of foods, habitat use and phenology (seasonal activity) is not as well developed in North America as it is in Great Britain and Europe. People armed with this guide, will have the tools to be at the forefront in remedying this situation. Compilations often function as a catalyst for a quantum leap in interest and new findings by curious naturalists. I predict this book will provide another great example in western Canada.

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A New World of Animals: Early Modern Europeans on the Creatures of Iberian America

By Miguel de Asua and Roger French. 2005. Ashgate Publishing Ltd., Aldershot, England. 235 pages. $89.95

How would you describe a beaver to someone who has never seen a beaver? Is it simply a 20 kg rat with thick fur and with something that has the texture and consistency of an elephant's ear sticking out of its backside? That person to whom you are giving the description might be forgiven for disbelieving you. What about a whole forest of new animals including muskrats, otters, woodchucks, skunks and any of the larger forest-dwelling species? In North America we have an abundance of animals which were unknown in the Old World before European exploration. Combine these animals with their South American counterparts and add birds, reptiles, amphibians, and insects known only to the New World and you have the basis for the book given to us from Miguel de Asua.

For the history buff and the technophile who wants to track down the classic literature of the conquest of the Americas, this book is a new door to obscure literature of natural history. Miguel de Asua is an Argentinian professor at the Universidad Nacional de San Martin and Roger French was English, from the department of History and Philosophy of Science at Cambridge University, UK. Their work focuses on the animals found by early explorers of the Americas, particularly South America though reference is made to animals occurring in North America as well. The reader is introduced to many of the early writers describing the newly discovered lands, and emphasis is placed on the animals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and insects which the authors noted at the time.

From the earliest explorers, Columbus and his followers, the discovery of the New World has been a discovery of the beauty and ferocity of many new and exciting creatures. Columbus returned with birds, skins and many stories trying to describe the richness of nature which he found and impress his audiences with tales of strange and exciting beasts. Written accounts which survived from his time sought to identify the animals, birds and reptiles using the experience of known animals and the descriptions are interesting associations with European and Asian animal forms put together to construct forms which would be within the experience of the audience. So bison looked like camels or cows, armadillos looked like striped foxes and manatees looked like large puppies.

For two hundred years the animals of the New World were exotic, unique and objects of wonder in Europe. Even as the years rolled on with more and more literature being accumulated from explorers, naturalists and then colonists with animals imported into Europe as exotic pets and zoo specimens, the earliest descriptions survived and were repeated. De Asua takes us on a literature search, naming writers, quoting their writ-