These accounts are illustrated [black-and-white line drawings] and give the reader a very exhaustive understanding of the individual species.

Spice plants are in a special category in the plant kingdom, and have been popularly used for various purposes in different countries or regions of the world. The history of the use of spice has even exceeded recorded history of human beings. Early humans might have used spice plants to preserve meat, fish or other food, reduce the annoying odors of various foods, or increase a special flavor when cooking. Gradually, these began to expand the range of use of spice plants.

Spice plants are closely related to the daily lives of human beings. Systematic research and summary of them is necessary, however, as this has not been well done before, at least in China. Now, this situation has been changed by the publication of the book Exploitation and Utilization of Chinese Spice Plant Resources by Zhang Weiming and Xiao Zhengchun et al. The authors have been engaged in research work on spice plant resources for a long time. They have conducted several research projects relating to Chinese spice plants in the last few decades, and obtained valuable and abundant data in this field. Meanwhile, they also collected other abundant information on spice plant resources at home and abroad. Based on these data and information, they produced this massive book.

There are a number of climate zones in China. Different environmental conditions allow for the growth of an abundance of plant species, including spice plants. Except for a few tropical species, most of the spice plants grow in China. China was one of the earliest countries to use spices. There are some records on the aromatic and spicy plants in the Book of Songs, the Book of Mountains and Seas, and other book that are over 2000 years old. Over a long time, due to the various usage of different types of spice plants in cooking, the people living in various areas of China formed a variety of eating habits, reflected in the so-called eight genres of cuisine of Chinese dishes. Hence, we might say that one of the most important reasons that Chinese food (or any other regional food) enjoys a world-wide reputation is its unique use of spices in cooking.

The indigenous spice plants in China are abundant. Furthermore, over the years, China introduced many foreign-origin species. The book not only is a systematic and comprehensive monograph on the spice plant resources of China, but also has its value as a reference for other related countries. The book is divided into two parts. The first part is a general introduction to spice plants, including the history of spice plants, the general situation of Chinese spice plant resources, the main ingredients and the application of spice plants,
the processing technology and the development of spice plants, and the strategy of the development of China spice plant resources. The second part is the special issues, including a total of 134 kinds of commonly used spices, and more than 200 spice plant species. For each spice plant species, the ecological environment, history of use, chemical ingredients, comprehensive methods of use, exploitation of related products, standardization and cultivation techniques, and so on were comprehensively introduced. The typically introduced spice plant species in this part include Capsicum frutescens, Allium sativum, Aglaia adorata, Allium cepa, Allium fistulosum, Allium porrum, Allium sativum, Artemisia vulgaris, Illicium verum, Foenicu-
lix, Pimpinella anisum, Sesamum indicum, Zanthoxy-
lym bungeanum, Zanthoxylum simulans, and Zingiber officinale, among others.

The book was well written with few errors, in a style of writing that can be easily understood by non-
scientists. As a comprehensive book, it is suitable for anyone who is engaged in the various areas of research and application of spice plants.

LI DEZHI

Lab of Urbanization and Ecological Restoration of Shanghai; National Field Observation and Research Station in Tiantong Forest Ecosystem of Zhejiang; Department of Environmental Science, East China Normal University, 3663, Zhongshan Road (N). Shanghai, China 200062

MISCELLANEOUS

Arctic Hell Ship


More of a human history than a natural history book, this tale covers part of one of the great sagas of Canada’s north. The Franklin Expedition left Britain with high hopes and the best resources available — well almost. It vanished in 1845 and spawned at least two dozen searches to solve the mystery of the disap-
pearance. These efforts in turn have led to a flood of books and scholarly articles.

So do we need another treatise? The answer is yes in this case. Barr’s contribution covers the 12th search by Captain R. Collinson aboard the HMS Enterprise with Robert John Le Mesurier M’Clure, as second in command, on the HMS Investigator. Barr gives us an extremely detailed description of life on one of Her Majesty’s ships in the 1800s. So often the other books concentrate on the leaders and their accomplishments, so we learn little of how the crew fares. Barr remedies this by telling us about many of the individual sailors. The “story” is very simple. This was a voyage that pro-
duced limited results and suffered a lot of bickering between the officers. As a result, the ship’s, logs and letters contain irritating daily details that show what life was really like.

Collinson was a good seaman and surveyor, but he was clearly not a leader. He picked on very minor transgressions and turned them into major discipli-

nary actions. He sowed unnecessary seeds of discord, interspersed by bouts of humanity. In hindsight, his biggest failure was that he did not do enough. He was charged with rescuing Franklin’s men and given the resources to do it, and yet he spent a lot of time sailing back and forth, unable to make a clear decision. His sledging trips were too little and too late. The other ships in his command (which got “separated” early in the expedition) went farther and did more. When

Collinson did make progress he found notes from either M’Clure or Dr. John Rae showing that they had searched the area earlier. In the tough conditions on board ship during an Arctic winter this debilitating caution and indecisiveness coupled with petty deci-
sions on discipline must have made an unhappy ship full of exasperated people.

Collinson returned to Britain, having failed to solve the Franklin issue, demanding courts-martial for his officers. The lords of the Admiralty wisely declined to take action. Public exposure of such silly shenanigans would do the service no good.

The most notorious British naval captain of this era is Bligh. In spite of the fact that his reputation owes more to the movies than reality, Bligh was a superb navigator, excellent seaman and a relatively humane captain. He personally intervened in the trials of the captured mutineers, got some set free and obtained reduced sentences for others. He died as a Vice-Admi-
rial. Collinson’s dithering and his stubborn need for absolute discipline would have made him a better can-
didate for Hollywood’s spite, yet even this would be unfair. How would we all fare under such harsh con-
ditions?

Collinson did make Vice-Admiral, after serving at Trinity House, the establishment that maintained the aids to navigation, where he rose to deputy master. He remained at Trinity House until retirement, clearly a better bureaucrat than expedition leader. Perhaps the error lies with the lords of the Admiralty. They fell into that awful trap. They promoted a very technically com-
petent person to a supervisor, a move that does not al-
ways work. In particular, voyages to the Arctic, even today, need competent leaders. Collinson did not come close to Nansen, Shackleton, Amundsen, or even Scott in his ability to deal with people.

While Barr has produced a minutely detailed doc-
ument, using all available evidence, rather than a dis-
Erratum The Canadian Field-Naturalist 126(4)

In response to the review of Contributions to the History of Herpetology. CFN 126(3): 344-345, the book’s editor Kraig Adler pointed out (personal communication to FRC 12 May 2013): “Only one small correction. Mrs. Martof used a kitchen knife, not a gun. She told the police she slipped while cutting some pizza. But Bernie was stabbed up under his rib cage several times!”

Erratum The Canadian Field-Naturalist

It has come to our attention that sections of many of the book reviews by Li Dezhi and Qin Aili were copied from sources without attribution. The journal and the authors apologize for this oversight.