

Book Reviews

ZOOLOGY

Damselflies of Alberta: Flying Neon Toothpicks in the Grass

By John Acorn. 2005. University of Alberta Press, Ring House 2, Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2E1 Canada. 156 pages. Can \$29.95.

I have a very strong interest in entomology, but no particular interest in Odonates, save for collecting the odd one for my odonatologist colleague. This small book has served to enlighten me and further my interest; I will look at damselflies more closely now.

In the bulk of the Preface, Acorn waxes about the restraints of scientific writing and laments about how dull it is to him. He prefers to write "in a frank and personal fashion, admitting to one's influences, desires, uncertainties and dislikes." However, much of "his" style (frank, admitting to influences and uncertainties) is the basis of scientific writing as well. Literature must be directed to an audience, and I don't think an odonatologist would find "dull" the scientific writing directed to his or her guild. A quick look at the bibliography reveals that the vast majority of works consulted for Acorn's book is from the scientific literature.

Having read the book, and having seen episodes of Acorn's TV show and his video interpretations at the Tyrell Museum, I believe Acorn is a wonderful author for children (e.g. "A big, mean, scary female water spider" is part of one caption in this damselfly book), but I don't think that writing for children alone is the intended extent of his scope. Acorn's goal is to write for the general public and to get people interested in natural history, and this book helps in that. However, the author does not give credit to people's intelligence...he changes names of structures on the damselflies simply because they sound too much like jar-

gon to him. I'm at a personal crossroads on this point – I firmly applaud Acorn's message of natural history education for everyone, but to me, his writing style actually detracts from getting the most out of the information in the book. For example, I did not find the limericks at the beginning of each species description at all interesting, humorous or otherwise worth the space. I believe one must write appropriately for the intended audience; there is no such thing as a book for all ages. And I do not enjoy reading books that seem to be written for children.

Technically, the book has very good points, as well as a few unfortunate oversights. The book is of a convenient size, suitable for taking in the field. The photography, while not stunningly appealing, is still quite vivid. It is not clear why there is a photograph of a dragonfly nymph in the introductory chapter, and none of a damselfly nymph; the latter ultimately does appear later in the book. Acorn describes the *necessity* of using a 10x lens to be able to identify damselflies in the field, yet there are no photographs of *any* of the features at this magnification in the book (there are some useful line drawings at the back of the book). However, this small book *is* packed with a lot of useful information on identification, ecology and behaviour of Alberta's damselflies, and for that reason alone would make a worthwhile addition to a naturalist's library.

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BOTANY

Flower Guide for Holiday Weekends

By E. Larsen and B. Roots. 2005. National Research Council Canada, 1200 Montreal Road, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0R6 Canada. vii + 149 pages. Paper.

This book is arranged to cover three key holiday weekends. The choice of weekends works equally well for both United States and Canada [Victoria Day/Memorial Day, Canada Day/Independence Day, Civic Holiday/Labour Day]. This is a good concept that will be most helpful to novices and visitors. By choosing your date you can readily see which of the common,

showy flowers are in bloom and thus narrow your search for the identity of a flower.

Each species is covered by a good strong narrative in layman's terms. While this text is non-scientific it is enlightening and helpful. This is accompanied by one to four photos of the plant, its flowers, seed, etc. The photos are top quality and are artistically set in the book, adding to its charm. The edges of the pages are coloured yellow, orange or blue to make it easy to pick the weekend. The book is relatively small so will slip easily into a pack or pocket.

Although 64 flower species are covered, eight of these are repetitions. That is, the text and photos are virtually identical. I do not see the point of this. A list of plants with overlapping flowering times would have been sufficient. In the extra space the authors could have added some new plants.

Orchids of Manitoba

By D. Ames, P. B. Acheson, L. Heshka, B. Joyce, J. Newfeld, R. Reeves, E. Reimer, and I. Ward. 2005. Native Orchid Conservation Inc., 117 Morier Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba Canada. \$17.95 + shipping charges.

This 158-page book with soft covers includes 36 orchid species known to occur in the province of Manitoba. It contains 218 absolutely beautiful colour pictures of different aspects of these delightful orchid plants in the text plus two more on the front and back covers.

The text begins with acknowledgements to all the individuals who have provided suggestions towards the book's production, the Manitoba Conservation staff for their guidance and the use of their maps, Kromar Printing for their assistance and getting the colours just right, and the financial support provided by the Province of Manitoba Special Conservation Fund, Shell Environmental Fund, and The Winnipeg Foundation. It is also noted here that the Native Orchid Conservation Inc., the publisher of this book, is a non-profit organization formed in 1998 to protect unique mini-ecosystems and their plant communities. This is followed by "A Brief History of Orchids," "Conservation and Biology," "Protection of Species and Ecosystems," "Orchid Biology," "Orchid Habitat" (including a map of Ecozones of Manitoba and sixteen pictures of habi-

This book would make a delightful gift for a traveller, cottage owner or those who simply like a good walk.

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tats), a "Key to the Orchids of Manitoba" (when in flower), and an "Introduction to the Species Accounts." The latter provides information on scientific names, abundance, habitat, flowering time, description, aids to identification and range maps.

Pages 45 to 145 are devoted to the illustrations, the distribution maps, and the most interesting descriptive text for the 36 orchid species treated in this book. Each descriptive page provides information on the common and scientific names, abundance, habitat, flowering time, descriptive information, aids to identification, and additional comments. The flowering times for Manitoba orchids are presented in alphabetical order of the scientific names with the common names in brackets on pages 146 to 148. This is followed by a bibliography on pages 149 to 151 and a Glossary on pages 152 to 155 and an Index on pages 156 to 157 which contains scientific names, common names and selective descriptive names to help the readers. In addition, a "Foreword" was provided by Paul M. Catling.

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ENVIRONMENT

Environmentalism Unbound: Exploring New Pathways for Change

By Robert Gottlieb. 2005. MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA. 2001. 287 pages. US\$74.25 Cloth, \$20.83 Paper.

Robert Gottlieb is professor of Urban and Environmental Policy at Occidental College in California, and his study area involves a variety of environmental policies and practices, mostly in the Los Angeles area. In our modern world, where diversity is publicized as the omen of political correctness, but where the survival of the richest is often the motivating factor, environmental awareness is reduced to single questions which can be handled by one-issue political campaigns. Single issues may facilitate winnable environmental battles but the strategy can leave other important areas without advocates. Gottlieb places the environment into the context of the whole sphere of life and shows connected parts interacting to create our quality of life-style. Unfortunately, as an urban environmentalist, his examples more often show how each of the parts has been contaminated by different political and com-

mercial interests and the big picture purposely left as a large unexamined grey area. This book is an attempt to reconcile many interests and show inroads which have already been made and can reasonably expect to be made in a number of industries by response to human needs, well-planned activism and some creative thinking.

The focus of the book is urban environmentalism exclusively in the United States, but as a study of that country, it informs us of the actions of environmental groups, the battles they fight and the progress they have been making. The ideas presented are ones which were studied in Los Angeles but the implications for change are important for the rest of North America. Is there an alternative in the dry cleaning industry to the solvent perchloroethylene? Can fresh fruits and vegetables be locally grown and marketed outside of multinational grocery and food distribution companies? And can the cleaning industry perform their service