

remote regions of wilderness and the places where we live, work and play.

We must thank Elder for eschewing sectarian language. His goal takes much more effort. It seeks a common ground that does not reduce to the lowest common denominator. The built environment, the cultivated environment, the wilderness environment; they all have a voice that needs to be heard. Elder speaks in the tradition of Aldo Leopold, René Dubos and Wendell Berry, voices that seek a dialogue between culture and the wild. For all three, the steward is the facilitator of such a needed task. The steward lives in that “boundary zone where the wilderness ethic may engage with recent developments of environmental history, and where the ideal of preservation transcending our narrow utilitarianism may engage with the tradition of stewardship.” (page 218)

This is marvellous meditation. It’s no wonder, since Elder’s trade and tackle are words and stories. He weaves a story, a meditation, a contemplation that opens up our mind and heart to new possibilities for our relationship to forests, to those wild and wonderful places. It is a story of people tending the olive groves under the warm Tuscany sun, and of his own family’s stewarding of the sugar maple groves of their Vermont

home. Landscape and culture provide the nexus of discussion. Forgetting one or the other dehumanizes us and sets the stage for either pillage or misanthropism.

In this era of apocalyptic predictions, environmental and social haemorrhaging, a widening gap between culture and nature, between rich and poor, urban and rural, Elder sets out a path of reconciliation, a path that seeks the common good. It’s a path laced with community, dialogue, a sense of the sacred, good work, justice, stewardship, care and respect. These virtues don’t come easily.

A final word to Elder: “I have come to believe that without the stories that integrate the face of nature with the drama of our human lives, society will not have the power to restrain our appetite and respect the larger balance of nature.” (page 67) If you accept this conclusion, read this book. It will draw you into a world of memory and elegance. If you don’t agree with Elder, read this book anyway. The full, inclusive fare offered by Elder will call you into a respectful dialogue.

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Where to Watch Birds – World Cities

By Paul Milne. 2007. Yale University Press P.O. Box 209040, New Haven, Connecticut 06520-9040 USA. 496 pages. U.S. 28.00 Paper.

This type of book is a reviewer’s dream. Before you open it you know the author, Paul Milne, must make choices and these will not be the same as your choices. This means you know you will have the opportunity to criticize. So how well do his choices match those I would have made? First he has included only one Canadian city, Toronto. It is Canada’s largest city but it is not the capital nor the best for the naturalist. One out of the 60 cities covered in the book seems a little thin for second largest country in the world [even if we rank 36th for population]. Putting my obvious bias aside, I noted that other key cities are missing. Oslo, with its great royal park, and Kiev, a city of wonderful chestnut trees, are two evident examples. Indeed 60% of the cities are in Europe and Asia; a disproportionate number for these two continents over North and South America and Australia.

Accepting the author’s choices, how useful is this book? First this book covers more than the city itself. When I visit Victoria, British Columbia, I get up at dawn and walk from my downtown hotel through Beacon Hill park to the coast. I return before breakfast and then go to my meeting. These two hour jaunts have netted me some very interesting birds [e.g. Ancient Murrelet]. These activities were all within the downtown core of Victoria and did not involve any travel. The author includes in his version of “city” many areas that

require significant travel – you will need a car. The equivalent of me driving to Goldstream Park, 17 kilometres from downtown Victoria, and more. Indeed some sites are over 100 km away (distances are given in the measurement used in the country; e.g., they are in miles in the U.S. and kilometres in Canada.)

Accepting the author’s broad boundaries how useful is this book? I would say very useful indeed. I have birded in almost half of the cities mentioned [generally without a car] and have visited many of the sites he describes. He has an introductory section that explains the city in birder’s terms and has a good section on transportation. Where there is a good public transportation to suitable birding locations (e.g., London, Moscow) the author provides enough information to get the traveller started. The site descriptions are clear and accurate and I wish I had owned this book years ago. There are locator maps where they are appropriate. There is a list of birds typically seen at each location. This worked well for all places and I verified with my notes that I too had seen a similar list of species.

I can quibble on some minor points. For example, under Johannesburg he includes Suikerbosrand [upland species – about 70 km from Johannesburg] but omits the nearby Pilansburg – perhaps the best park to visit [lowland species – about 100+ km from Johannesburg]. His information on travel omits to say it would be almost suicidal for a tourist to drive in Mumbai. Taxis are cheap and you can get a car and driver, sympathetic to your needs, from the Bombay Natural His-

tory Society for reasonable cost. If you take a photo booth shot of yourself plus a glue stick to Austria, you can get a multi-day pass to Vienna's excellent public transit; a most economical way to travel.

All in all this is a great and useful book. My next trips are to Halifax and then Anchorage, but neither of these is included by the author. However, I look forward to using it on my next trip to one of the cities in

this book, which will likely be Moscow. I would encourage Paul Milne to travel more in North and South America. Then I can hope he plans a second volume to cover some of the cities he has missed.

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Marshes: The Disappearing Edens

By W. Burt. 2007. Yale University Press, P.O. Box 209040
New Haven, Connecticut 06520-9040 USA. 192 pages.
U.S. 35.00 Cloth.

William Burt has a very deserved reputation. His photographs are amazing. As a naturalist who also takes photos I have some idea of the skill and the patience needed to get a good shot. Burt goes beyond good. Not only are the photos amazing in their quality, but he specialises in birds that are typically difficult to see! Take Black Rail as an example. I spent several hours at night wading in a swamp with an ardent group of seekers before I had my first glimpse of a Black Rail. It ran over my foot. It took another hour to actually get my binoculars [and flashlight] on one of the cute but elusive beasts. The idea of a photograph never entered my head. I do have some slides of other rail species I took mostly by good luck. They are nice, but they are not artistic and they all have little flaws. Burt's photos are technically crisp and clear. They are also artistic; the kind you would frame and hang on the wall.

In addition to birds, the author has also included a number of pictures of marsh vegetation and some of the more picturesque flowers. Actually this book is over 50% photographs.

Once you have finished drooling over the illustrations you could read the text. The author describes his visits to wetlands throughout North America. Starting with his home base in Connecticut river marshes he travels to Maryland (Elliot Island), Manitoba (Sewall Lake), Saskatchewan (Crane Lake), Oregon (Malheur) and California (Klamath). He also takes us on a trip

through wetlands in Texas, Louisiana, Florida and Virginia. At each site he describes the value that each place brings and some of the issues it now faces.

Burt make an emotional, almost poetic appeal for marshes. He describes his favourite haunts along the east coast of the United States with such verve that I realised, somewhat for the first, that I too had experienced the same feelings. I tend to look at life more clinically, but Burt is more passionate and has shown that I have similar emotions to him below the surface.

I believe you should learn something new every day. I began to learn as soon as I started to read. For the first time I properly understand the issue with *Phragmites*. The ones I see are more likely the aggressive – and therefore dangerous – European plant and not the look-alike native version. Alien invaders are a key threat and *Phragmites* and loosestrife lead that charge.

His description of the work of the photographers Walter Finley and Herman Bohlman in the 1800s is enlightening on the persistence and dedication of these pioneers plus their resounding contribution to conservation.

This a lovely book and would make a wonderful present for both naturalists and non-naturalists. The beautiful writing style and powerful messages might even convert some folks to be conservationists.

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