

to, and that was the description of the author, in a line with a dozen other birders, wading through a long grass prairie in an attempt to flush a Baird's Sparrow. While this anecdote was properly set in a discussion of ethics (he stepped on a grouse nest) the action described was out of character with the rest of the book (or even the advice provided in the rest of the book) and the ethical dimensions could have been more forcefully argued. These points do not seriously detract from the book, and I would rank it among the best birding "how-to" books I have encountered.

This book is aimed at the novice. If you have just started birding, this book is for you. If you know someone who has just started, this book would make a great gift. You may even want to lend it to your spouse, friends or relatives; anyone who is trying to figure out what all the fuss is about. Better still: donate it to the local school library after you are done with it. Will there be more to learn after you put this book down? Absolutely, but that is the whole point of the book: birding is a lifelong discovery.

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BOTANY

Alpine Plants of North America: An Encyclopaedia of Mountain Flowers from the Rockies to Alaska

By Graham Nicholls and Rick Lupp, Consulting Editor. 2003. Timber Press, 133 SW 2nd Avenue, Ste. 450, Portland, Oregon 97204 USA. 344 pages. U.S. \$49.95. Cloth.

Entitled *Alpine Plants of North America*, this 344 page book takes an all-embracing look at many of nature's floral delights, which the author explains as being categorized as alpine, though they may be found anywhere from seaside to high mountain. Mr. Nicholls wins my applause by telling us that he likes to limit his plants to 30 cm (12 inches) in height, which I find keeps plants in scale in an average home rock garden.

The title might be a bit amusing to a Canadian – it appears to have been accomplished by excluding any plant references to land we hold dear! We are told the book is intended for practical, on site use, both in the field and in an owner's garden – generally Graham has succeeded but he falters a bit in the area of plant identification – something which is vital to enthusiastic alpine plant lovers. May I suggest that a few less species photographs and more emphasis on their clarity (there were a number of photos from which identification would be difficult if not impossible). More close-ups of flowers and foliage would help a great deal.

I thought that the format of the book was excellent: information on plants' natural growing areas and cultural tips made for a most helpful package of useful information. Choosing the best location and growing medium for our newest acquisitions is very often a painful experience. Having several identical plants and plenty of spare sites is sometimes our best hope of

success. However, a careful reading of the needs of each species covered in this book should save many early plant funerals!

The introduction of little known species is great fun and I applaud Mr. Nicholls's inclusion of *Talimium* in his writing. I have only one species in my collection to date – *T. selinoides* – but after seeing photos of such beauties as *T. brevifolium*, and *T. 'Zoe'*, I shall be very soon searching for more. It is most amazing to observe the miniature size, quantity and length of blooming period in this enjoyable plant.

It is refreshing to find a proven plantsman willing to share his knowledge of plant propagation so freely. This is most evident in his detailed directions concerning the taking of cuttings from various species of Phlox. Perhaps his most helpful writings in this area are the descriptions of each species' natural surroundings, soil conditions, and moisture tolerance. The book entices the reader to find suppliers of seeds, plants, or best of all to follow in Graham Nicholls' footsteps – to see at first hand the alpine specimens he has so carefully covered.

Both author Graham Nicholls and consulting editor Rick Lupp have done a magnificent job in producing a book of much needed information about the identification and growing of alpine plants and done it in a neat, readable, and orderly fashion. This book will give the reader true value for his or her money.

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Arboretum America, A Philosophy of the Forest

By Diana Beresford-Kroeger. 2003. University of Michigan Press, 839 Greene Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104-3209 USA. 196 pages. U.S. \$29.00.

Arboretum America, A Philosophy of the Forest is a unique work. It's a book about trees in a compound context – global, local and personal – informed by an

intriguing variety of perspectives, including ecology, ethnobotany, horticulture, ethnology and mythology. The result is an eclectic and appealing book, no great surprise considering that the author, Canadian Diana Beresford-Kroeger, is, according to the back cover, a "botanist, medical and agricultural researcher, lecturer and self-defined "renegade scientist" in the fields of

classical botany, medical biochemistry, organic chemistry and nuclear chemistry.”

The book starts with an introduction that includes appealing stories from Beresford-Kroeger’s childhood, a discussion of the world as a global garden, a definition of Beresford-Kroeger’s concept of “bioplanning” (covered in her previous book *Bioplanning a North Temperate Garden*), and a description of how bioplanning applies to forests. She then goes on to profile 20 North American tree groupings, including – genus followed by common name – *Acer* (Maple), *Asimina triloba* (Pawpaw), *Betula* (Birch), *Carya* (Hickory), *Catalpa* (Catalpa), *Crataegus* (Hawthorn), *Fraxinus* (Ash), *Gleditsia* (Honey Locust), *Juglans nigra* (Black Walnut), *Magnolia acuminata* (Cucumber Tree), *Ostrya virginiana* (Hop Hornbeam), *Pinus* (Pine), *Ptelea trifoliata* (Wafer Ash), *Quercus* (Oak), *Sambucus* (Elderberry), *Sassafras* (Sassafras), *Thuja occidentalis* (Cedar), *Tilia* (Basswood), *Tsuga* (Hemlock), *Ulmus* (Elm).

It’s puzzling, this choice of trees. Why these groupings and not others? Why include elderberries and leave out dogwoods, why hemlocks and not firs, why birches and not aspens? The author never tells us why; never explains her inclusion and exclusion criteria. And I can’t help but wonder, as I wander the fields and forests of home, about the cherries and beeches, tamaracks and spruces ... should they not be included in forest bioplanning too?

That little grievance aside, the book is vibrant and delightful, with much to teach from the wide range of perspectives mentioned earlier. Each profile includes six sections: “The Global Garden”, tracing the history and geography of each tree grouping; “Organic Care”, covering related horticultural topics; “Medicine”, discussing traditional and potential medicinal uses; “Ecofunction”, describing the trees’ ecological roles;

Cape Cod Wildflowers: A Vanishing Heritage

By Mario J. DiGregorio and Jeff Wallner. 2003. University Press of New England, One Court Street, Lebanon, New Hampshire 03766 USA. 169 pages. U.S. \$19.95.

This is a reprint of the original volume first published in 1989 by Mountain Press Publishing Company, with a new introduction by the authors. As the authors state, “This book is an appreciation, a guide, and a plea for protection. On one hand it explores the arcane lore of the medieval herbalists... On the other, it chronicles the latest scientific understanding of flowers’ ecological importance and current attempts to preserve natural diversity.”

If not unique, this book is at least one of very few examples of this particular approach to botanical description. It is arranged in chapters based upon habitat types, all common to the Cape Cod area. Each habitat is described in the opening of its chapter. The habitats include woodlands; ponds and bogs; sandplains; salt

“Bioplan”, explaining how the trees have been and could continue to be incorporated into human environments; and “Design”, about the trees’ appearances and aesthetic properties.

Much of the information was new to me. Like a maple biochemical, acerin, currently being investigated for antiviral and antibiotic qualities. Like the birch being one of the two sacred trees given to the Aboriginal peoples of North America. Like pines contributing numerous important air-freshening compounds to the atmosphere. Like hawthorn fruit being called a “pome” which, along with the leaves, produces a number of biochemicals which form a high-energy compound beneficial to migrating birds. Like basswoods producing huge crops of nectar at a time when bees need it desperately and many other flowering plants have stopped blooming.

The profiles are interspersed with photographs of other members of the forest community – lichens, fungi, flowering plants, shrubs – which help enhance the bioplanning concept and paint a larger picture of the forest ecosystem. And the occasional yellow boxes with relevant stories from the author’s life add a pleasing personal touch.

One of the most personal touches in the book appears at the end of the introduction, where Beresford-Kroeger shares with us her dream “that a moratorium will be put on the cutting of what is left of the global forests and that ordinary people with an acorn and a shovel begin the long road back to nature.” Ordinary people. That’s me. Though I don’t know if I have any acorns around. But there’s a collection of shovels in the garden shed, and space along the fence. Perhaps I could manage to find a handful of maple keys ...

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marshes; and dunes and beaches, with an additional chapter to accommodate alien species.

Each habitat type is represented by ten to fifteen species endemic to each area. As the authors admit, the sampling is limited in scope, covering only 66 of the 1300 species of vascular plants found in the Cape Cod area. Each species is covered on facing pages, with the left-hand page containing a description of the plant and other comments on such aspects as propagation and threats to its environment. A colour photograph of the flower is located on the right hand page.

The authors could have, however, spent a little more time in researching their data, especially since this is the second edition of their work. The pollination process of *Cypripedium acaule*, for instance, suffers from the following extremely fanciful and highly inaccurate description. “Drawn by the promise of a sugar “high” from the nectar inside, insects enter through the slit... On the way out the insect is plastered with a natural