

tribution, habitats, variations, pollination trapping mechanisms and other interesting information. For anyone with botanical interests this is a most worthwhile contribution.

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## An Eclectic Guide to Trees East of the Rockies

By Glen Blouin. 2001. Boston Mills Press, Erin, Ontario. 280 pages. \$29.95.

If you like trees, you must read this book. Actually, if you like trees, you will want to acquire a copy of *An Eclectic Guide to Trees East of the Rockies* for your very own. Abounding with the sort of information identification books don't have room to accommodate, it is an excellent complement to the usual tree field guides.

Glen Blouin loves trees. It's obvious. He writes about them with a tenderness and passion that makes the book hard to put down once you start reading. And he has come to know each tree species so thoroughly (based on considerable experience and research) that he presents details and tidbits you will be hard pressed to find elsewhere between the same covers.

Blouin starts each species profile with an identification page. This section provides the tree's scientific and common name, plus other names in English and French. It also includes the name for the tree in one of North America's many Aboriginal languages. White Birch in Woods Cree, for example, is *waskway*; Hickory in Cayuga, *onenoga*; Red Oak in Pawnee, *nahata-pahat*; Black Ash in Mohawk, *ehsa*; Tamarak in Abenaki, *akemantak*; White Spruce in Ojibway, *zese-gaandag*; Chokecherry in Assiniboin, *champah*; Eastern Hemlock in Onondaga, *o-ne-tah*; White Elm in Shawnee, *hani:pi*.

The identification spread also includes a description of the tree's leaf, flower, fruit, twig, bark, wood, height, diameter, and longevity, plus the first of multiple photographs scattered throughout the species profile.

But my favourite part of each profile comes after the identification page. That's where Blouin presents the "eclectic" information which makes this book so extraordinary. For each species, he covers any combination of the following: the tree's history and use by humans, suitability to woodworking and other industrial pur-

poses, traditional uses by Aboriginal North Americans, importance to wildlife and ecosystems, ornamental use and propagation, natural enemies like pests and diseases, conservation issues, and more — the sort of things Blouin calls "relevant digressions." These species profiles reveal each tree as a fascinating character and significant member of a greater community of life.

Here are some facts and figures I found fascinating. The White Elm's leaves are rich in iron, potassium and calcium; and they decompose quickly to improve the soil. Willows apparently interbreed and hybridize freely, making it very difficult to identify individuals with certainty. A fungal disease is seriously threatening the survival of Butternuts in North America; there is fear, in fact, that the butternut might go the way of the American Chestnut. Jack Pine stands on Michigan's lower peninsula are one of the last remaining nesting habitats for the highly endangered Kirtland's Warbler. Small Eastern Hemlocks can exist up to 200 years in the forest understorey, waiting for shorter-lived trees to die and provide conditions for the smaller hemlocks to shoot upwards. Various conifers vie for the distinction of having provided Jacques Cartier with a cure for scurvy. Cottonwoods are the fastest growing native tree east of the Rockies. And Striped Maple leaves provide soft and strong toilet paper in the bush.

That's only a brief sampling of the wonderfully diverse information presented in this eclectic guide to trees east of the Rocky Mountains. My only complaint is that there's no index. Perhaps the publishing budget ran short of money. Perhaps the wide-ranging nature of the content would have made indexing problematic. There's probably a good reason why an index was not included. But I sure miss it, particularly when I'm looking for a particular nugget of information among all those tidbits.

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