

els of forest response to disturbance, 3-D models of succession in different forest types, and a final classification of four different types of forest landscape.

This work is particularly important as humans continue to "disturb" forests, especially by commercial forestry. Before any claims can be made about the desirability of the changes created by human interventions, it is essential to properly comprehend the range of natural forest disturbance regimes and the associated changes in forest structure and tree species composition.

The book addresses the scientific community and would properly be of greatest interest to forest ecologists and to all students of forest change. The judicious mix of empirical case studies, hypothetical examples and conceptual models helps the reader to think "beyond the box." The many line drawings, flow charts and black-and-white photographs help to clarify the different concepts.

As one is reminded in the subtitle, this book focuses exclusively on the temperate evergreen-deciduous forests of the Lake States. While it is certain that many of the concepts developed from research in this forest type are applicable to other forest types, it is wise to resist any quick and easy transfer of ideas. Forests grow in conditions that span a wide ecological spectrum, a situation that often resists our human tendency to categorize and classify. Be that as it may, this book provides rich and substantive insight into this well-studied and much loved forest region at the deciduous-boreal interface.

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The Sacred Balance: A Visual Celebration of Our Place in Nature

By David Suzuki and Amanda McConnell. Greystone Books, Vancouver, British Columbia, 151 pages. CDN \$55.

With over 100 pages of illustrations and its large page format, this book may at first glance appear to fit into the "coffee table" book genre. However, a closer read reveals a somewhat more substantial literary content. This book is an interesting juxtaposition of science and art that explores the role of humans in the earth's global ecology. The authors describe aspects of human ecology in ways that make the ideas accessible to the non-scientist, weaving story-telling, poetry, and creative analogies into the text. The book makes lavish use of illustrations to demonstrate ways in which humans are inextricably linked to our global ecosystem. The eclectic collection of photographs portrays life ranging from views of bacteria under a microscope to satellite panoramas of the earth. The images capture some stunning landscapes and unique views of human personality and culture, making this book a worthwhile purchase for its photographic merit alone.

Suzuki and McConnell begin by introducing the view widely held in many aboriginal cultures that the environment is not something separate from humans but rather that we are part of the earth. Viewing humans as part of the ecological community is not a new idea. It was the view espoused by Aldo Leopold and others more than a century ago, and the concept that epitomized the roots of the conservation movement. However, Suzuki and McConnell add a fresh perspective to this paradigm. The authors classify seven elements that connect humans with the earth: water, air, fire, earth, biodiversity, love and spirit. Each of these themes, plus the introduction, forms the basis for the book's organization into eight chapters.

The first section of the introduction skips hastily from big bang theory and the origins of multi-cellular life to biodiversity, global ecology, and human cultural

evolution. The rapidity with which complex scientific concepts are very superficially reviewed in the introduction is at times cumbersome. Covering so much ground in a short span of text leaves the reader feeling somewhat like they've covered the history of planet earth in fast-forward. Nevertheless, the authors do make successful albeit brief explanations of many complex concepts through their use of creative analogies. For example, in explaining the uncertainty of the effects of genetically modified organisms, the authors explain,

"This situation is comparable to pulling Bono out of U2, popping him into the middle of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, and asking him to 'do his thing' with them. Sounds will emerge, but we certainly cannot anticipate the musical nature of the output."

Such quirky references to popular culture and common human experiences are used creatively throughout the chapters of this book. The second section of the introduction draws on experiences from David Suzuki's professional and private life, and presents an enlightening personal view of our place in nature.

After rushing through a myriad of concepts in the introduction, the proceeding chapters present information in smaller, more digestible chunks, with succinct and thought-provoking chapters exploring each of the seven elements. The authors draw expertise from fields as diverse as biochemistry, toxicology, psychiatry, cosmology, ecology, and anthropology. Each chapter concludes with a series of photographs, poetry, and quotations that further illustrates the chapter theme. Given the somewhat dense introductory chapter, I was surprised to find no concluding chapter providing some interpretation and synopsis of the mix of ideas. This was perhaps deliberate on the part of the authors, leaving it up to the reader to draw their own conclusions. Nevertheless, the concepts of the book are per-

haps best summarized by the concluding words of the introduction, which leave us with the statement that "If we can grasp that we *are* the world we depend on, then we will find where we truly belong and get on with seeking a way to live in harmony within a rich, vibrant community of living things."

This book is a unique and insightful pictorial exploration of the complex relationships between humans and planet earth. The book is both aestheti-

cally attractive and intellectually engaging, making it an excellent gift for either scientist or layperson with an interest in natural history and conservation.

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Great Wildlife of the Great Plains

By Paul A. Johnsgard. 2003. University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, USA. 309 pages.

Great Wildlife of the Great Plains is a narrative book about the species representative of the Great Plains, from the grasslands of Texas to the mixed prairies of Canada. The text highlights 121 species of birds and mammals, with each chapter covering a different geographic area. After a short introduction describing the different geographical regions, Johnsgard presents eight chapters based on geography: (tallgrass prairie (Chapter 2), mixed-grass prairie (Chapter 3), short-grass prairie (Chapter 4), sandhills grasslands (Chapter 5), arid shrubsteppes (Chapter 6), riverine and upland hardwood forests (Chapter 7), coniferous forests and woodlands (Chapter 8), and prairie wetlands (Chapter 9). The last three chapters take a different approach, with an overall presentation of the most common wildlife species (Chapter 10), then seasonal or occasional species (Chapter 11 "Migrants and drifters"), and concludes with a chapter discussing some of the recurring themes and conservation challenges (Chapter 12 "What is still so great about the Great Plains"). This last one invites the reader to visit this region, even if only "Armed with an inquiring mind and a field guide or two..." (page 212).

The book has a well-recognized bird bias: the author readily admits the bias in the preface (page xiii), and warns that the coverage is 61% birds, 23% mammals, and 16% reptiles and amphibians (based on 121 species discussed). However, my perception is that the book emphasizes birds even more, and I would have to guess that 75% of the actual text refers to birds, a bias likely arising from the author's expertise and background being mostly ornithological. The bias is less pronounced in the illustrations, with 73 figures devoted to birds (50%), mammals (33%), reptiles and amphibians (10%), and geographic maps (7%). The book does present most species of interest, but maybe one

interesting species missing is the raccoon (see species index pages 305-309). Although the latter is not an "icon" of the Great Plains, this species is of great interest since it has been colonizing the northern prairies recently.

The format is pleasing, and the drawings help illustrate the species mentioned. Perhaps even more useful is the provision of five appendices illustrating tracks and sign of Great Plains species (Appendix 1), a list of nature preserves and natural areas (Appendix 2), a list of birds (Appendix 3), a list of mammals (Appendix 4), and a list of reptiles and amphibians (Appendix 5). The lists are not exhaustive, and do contain some errors in scientific names (see black-footed ferret, page 258, and nutria page 262). Nonetheless, they provide the reader unfamiliar with the Great Plains a good idea of which species can be found in which habitat and what states.

The book is narrative, and the prose makes it more palatable for lay audiences. The author's anecdotes of his childhood in North Dakota are often referred to (examples on pages 17, 19) and, in my opinion, add a "real-life touch" to an otherwise informational piece. The book is probably most valuable as an overview of what species are found in each geographic region, and in that respect, is best suited to those unfamiliar with the respective areas. To the latter, this book leaves few stones unturned, and is a good addition to the naturalist interested in learning more about the Great Plains and the wildlife to be encountered therein.

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