

“Under what conditions do forests change or stay the same?” Thus might one summarize the intent of this book. Introductory chapters set the scene by describing the Great Lakes temperate forests and their disturbance regimes dominated by fire, wind, insect outbreaks and mammalian herbivory. Of significance to the practicing forest ecologist will be the chapter on sampling and interpretative techniques used to detect and interpret forest disturbance regimes. Emphasis is placed on the use of tree radial increment patterns as a valuable source of insight into stand disturbance history.

Frelich emphasizes the critical role played by disturbance in both stand development and forest succession. He properly distinguishes between stand development and succession, both of which are often confused in the literature. Disturbance will always initiate a new cycle of stand development in the regenerating, post-disturbance forest. However, disturbance may or may not initiate a species change or a new successional sequence.

Consideration is also given to the differing effects of disturbance at both the stand- and landscape-level. This distinction is important, especially given the wide temporal and spatial scales at which disturbances may occur. Furthermore, instability at the stand level may be interpreted as stability at the landscape level. Interpretation often depends on the scale of investigation.

A particular strength of this work is Frelich’s ability to engage the complex interaction of different disturbances. Frelich not only introduces the wide diversity of temporal and spatial patterns of forest change, but even more importantly, highlights often counter-intuitive insights into forest change and continuity. I found the following particularly noteworthy: (1) the nonlinear response of forest species composition to disturbance severity, (2) the cause and development of patchy hardwood-software mosaics, (3) clarifying taxonomy of the concept of old-growth, (4) how different forest types

can exist on relatively homogeneous sites, and (5) the multiple successional pathways open to any particular forest type. Frelich’s final chapter summarizes the notion of forest stability. It provides conceptual models 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 of greatest interest to forest ecologists and 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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### **Snowshoes & Spotted Dick; Letters from a Wilderness Dweller**

By Chris Czajkowski. 2003. Harbour Publishing Co. Ltd., PO Box 219, Madeira Park, British Columbia V0N 2H0 Canada. 298 pages. Paper U.S.\$24.95

This book is a one-sided account of the wilderness experiences of a woman of extraordinary independence, as she writes letters to a friend named Nick. Chris Czajkowski is an author and wilderness guide who has chosen a life of relative and geographic isolation on remote property where she lives three quarters of the year in the coast mountains of British Columbia, 480 kilometres north of Vancouver. There is no telephone or mail delivery and the radio only works on clear days. The computer used while writing the book draws the electricity required to function from solar panels. The visitors to the eco-tourism business “Nuk Tessli Alpine Experience” are brought in by float

plane, along with any supplies and news from the outside world.

This, the fourth book by the same author, is her account of the incredible effort to build a third cabin on the property. Its format of letters scribed to a friend in Germany is generously interspersed with some textual description, a few black-and-white pictures and hand-drawn sketches.

The reader is drawn in by expressive language evoking in the imagination pictures of the breathtaking vistas, and natural surroundings so that you feel almost as though you have been there, perhaps as a visitor to “Nuk Tessli”. The added mystery of “what is Spotted Dick?” is a cute grab but is just a little overdone.

The easy flow of the language makes the 298 pages an easy read, despite the occasional construction jargon.

The actual process of building a log cabin in the woods, particularly in such a remote location, is fascinating. The cabin is built in several steps, over numerous months, using hand tools, chainsaws, and, occasionally, some friends.

There are a few drawbacks from the enjoyment of this book though, especially without having read the first three. The first is that in this book there are a number of interesting stories that are alluded to but not told in detail because they've been recorded in the previous books. The second is that the letters are all to Nick and because it does not include the letters written from him, it feels a bit like being in the same room with someone on the phone – you hear half the conversation and although you get the gist of the

whole, you feel the missing of the other half. The third and most perplexing is the lack of description of the characters or their relationship with each other. The reason this is perplexing is because the author herself describes this criticism received from a book reviewer – and then simply passes it off with “The trouble is, I live with the people I write about. Experience has shown that no matter how innocuous a portrait I paint, the subject will find something about which he or she is unhappy.” While I am sure this could be true, the book would earn a wider audience if it were not written for those people alone.

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### Natural Grace: The Charm, Wonder, & Lessons of Pacific Northwest Animals & Plants

By William Dietrich. 2003. University of Washington Press, 1326 Fifth Avenue, Suite 555, Seattle, Washington 98101-2604 USA. 236 pages. U.S.\$19.95

*Natural Grace* is a contemporary example of the medieval book of beasts called a bestiary. Bestiaries were very popular during the Medieval Period, and focused on the life of nature as a model or paradigm for human behavior. These books were not scientific in the contemporary sense of the term, but instead combined religious and moral teaching with a close observation of nature, zoological commentaries, and fabulous and fictitious creatures. Rather than being studied in and of itself, nature was considered symbolic of both the virtue and moral life of human beings. While Dietrich's work certainly provides the reader with a more sophisticated scientific understanding of nature, the subtitle of the book betrays its “bestiary” lineage as the reader is invited to appreciate the charm, wonder, and lessons of a variety of creatures and natural phenomena.

This collection of essays is adapted from William Dietrich's popular articles in the *Seattle Times' Northwest Magazine*. The author divides his work among four themes: (1) the common and ubiquitous creatures that we often take for granted, (2) the itty-bitty world that ranges from soil to spiders, (3) the rhythmic, clockwork world of tectonics and tides, and finally, (4) the iconic symbols of the Pacific Northwest including, among others, the bald eagle and the killer whale or orca.

Dietrich is gifted with the contemplative eye. Follow his gaze and you will enter a world of delight and amazement. We live side by side with other creatures and are immersed within the workings of nature. But often, we are oblivious to the ways of our environs, so intent and fascinated are we with our own creations and fabrications. Dietrich pries apart our fabricated world and invites us to direct our gaze out beyond the confines of culture. He calls us to a long loving gaze on the other of nature.

This contemplative gaze is a virtue that strengthens with time and practice. Dietrich is a patient and humorous guide, gently leading the reader to grow in knowledge of the natural world; knowledge, not simply of the biological or physical facts, but of the beauty, significance, and yes, even mystery inherent in the subject of our gaze. Of special interest is the manner by which the author weaves together culture and nature. Whether it be the forces of nature that define the boundaries of human culture and provide the myriad free ecological services that allow us our cities and farms, or the manner in which particular species have become embedded in our folk and cultural lore, the reader is left with the knowledge that we are dependent on the “others” of nature far beyond our physical survival.

Human ignorance instills fear, and fear breeds violence and destruction. *Natural Grace* sets a contrary path. Knowledge of the other, of nature, can lead to intimacy, and intimacy can be the foundation of love. Love, in turn, leads to mutuality, care, and concern for the other. Dietrich's melodious writing can indeed lead one to greater love of nature and hopefully, action on behalf of nature.

This book is a lovely blend of nature and culture, of scientific vulgarization and social lore. You will learn much about the natural history of the Pacific Northwest. As well, I think, you will learn about how we (and maybe you yourself) relate to the natural world, and how that relationship has changed with time, and how it may or must change in the future.

Given Dietrich's place of habitation (Seattle), this book focuses on the State of Washington, with excursions south to Oregon and north to British Columbia. So, if you call the Pacific Northwest your home, you will learn much about your “neighbours.” However, regardless of one's geography, Dietrich's work is more a work of perspective, rather than of content. His actors live and work in the Pacific Northwest, but the perspective shared is universal. No matter where you