

BOTANY

Atlas des Plantes Villages du Nunavik – Atlas of Plants of the Nunavik Villages

By Marcel Blondeau, Claude Roy and Alain Cuerrier. 2004. Editions Multi Mondes, 930, rue Pouliot, Sainte-Foy, Quebec G1V 3N9, Canada. xxvii + 610 pages. \$42.75 (includes taxes and shipping).

This small book ($5 \times 7 \times 1 \frac{1}{8}$ inches) contains 433 pages depicting absolutely beautiful flowering plants and lichens that can be found around the villages in Nunavik, that part of Quebec north of latitude 55°N . Included on each illustration page is a distribution map which depicts the towns around which each species was found in Nunavik, together with a square mark which indicates its wider range into Iqaluit, Labrador, Newfoundland, Mingan Island and Gaspé Peninsula.

The Preface, Table of Contents, How plants are used by the Nunavik Inuit, List of Vascular Plants, List of

Invascular Plants and General Index are all provided in three languages: French, English and Inuit.

This book will be most interesting and useful to all visitors of the seventeen localities which were visited by the first author between 1983 and 1998 who made observations of the plants within a 10 km radius of each of the sites. It will also be very intriguing to anyone who has an opportunity to examine this beautiful book but never have an opportunity to visit the region.

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ENVIRONMENT

Boreal Forest of Canada and Russia

By W. O. Pruitt and L. M. Baskin. 2004. Pensoft Publishers, Sofia, Bulgaria. 163 pages, Hardcover. \$94.76 (Can.)

Pruitt and Baskin are founders and directors of field research stations set up in the boreal forest regions of their respective countries. This book is far narrower in focus than the title suggests, however, concentrating on descriptions of the two field stations, their history, an outline of the work done there, and some observations on the surrounding terrain and landscape. The underlying idea, though unstated except through the title, appears to be that these two small areas can be considered representative of the vast regions of boreal forest on the two continents. The bulk of the book, though, does not deal with the forest but concentrates on its inhabitants. The text contains extensive discussion of the wildlife (pages 54–157) in the areas surrounding these field stations, with most of the discussion concentrating on mammals, which are the principal research foci of both authors. It is written in a straight-forward narrative style, with few in-text citations, and is clearly aimed at the avocational naturalist or general reader.

Most of the book focuses on the Taiga Biological Station, founded by Pruitt, which has been in operation since 1973. The station is located northeast of Winnipeg, near the Manitoba-Ontario border. It has provided a base for many ecological and zoological studies through the years. The Station's web page (www.wilds.mb.ca/taiga/intro.html) lists sixty-three written items, of which ten are MSc dissertations. The station has been used as a base for undergraduate field courses, visits by naturalists clubs, studies by museum curators, and projects by researchers from other institutions. Thus outreach and education, both formal and informal, are prime reasons for the station's existence.

About a third of the text discusses the Kostroma Taiga Biological Station, located northeast of Moscow in the Volga River drainage basin, set up in 1977. From Baskin's account, it appears that this area has been much more impacted by human activity than the area around the Canadian field station. He describes how intensive logging, game hunting, and fur trapping was carried out in the region. Recently, scientific activity at the field station has concentrated on game management and the study of animal populations under severe hunting pressure. Baskin also recounts attempts to introduce bison and cattle to the forest, to take advantage of grazing not being used by other large mammals (pages 97–103).

The majority of the text describes the wildlife of the two areas. Many of the animals (such as hares, wolves, bears, and moose) are common to both areas. Following a general survey of the wildlife and habitats, Baskin describes in more detail two species of birds and seven of mammals, mostly large mammals or fur-bearers. Pruitt contributes descriptions of thirteen mammals or groups of mammals, seven groups of birds, and a brief survey of amphibians, reptiles, and a few invertebrates. He devotes much attention to the ecology of Woodland Caribou (pages 109–116), which he describes "as the most endangered mammal in Canada today" (page 116), under pressure from fragmentation of and development in its habitat and with the potential for further shrinking of available habitat in response to climate change.

Both field stations have been in operation for about a quarter century, yielding long-term data for their research areas. Such data sets are rare in ecology. Pruitt notes that he had the opportunity to set up studies of landscape recovery when the area around the station was afflicted by especially massive fires in 1980. Here,

however, is where I had a major problem with this book. There are no maps of the field sites! I found this omission truly surprising. It is impossible for anyone unfamiliar with the area to follow Pruitt's discussion of the course of the fires through the region (pages 58-64). Similarly, Pruitt spends time describing six one acre study plots set up in the field area (pages 49-54). However, I found myself wondering how these are distributed on the landscape, how they relate to each other and other landscape features such as lakes and streams, and what the pattern of substrates might be. There is really not enough contextual information here to make this account intelligible. I had a similar problem with the discussion of the Russian field station.

It is interesting to compare and contrast the difficulties both research directors describe in the running of their respective stations. The institutional and administrative settings differ, but many of the problems are common to both. Pruitt deplores the depredations by forest companies and excoriates the provincial government for lack of support for conservation of the boreal landscape. He also makes an impassioned plea for the sustainable use of the boreal ecoregion, advancing "ecotourism" as a use that is both sustainable and likely in the long-term to generate support for conservation policies. Baskin laments the chaos following the breakup of the Soviet Union and describes the inroads unrestricted hunting, not for sport but for food and subsistence, made into the mammal populations around the field station. It is clear that both stations have struggled with uncertainty and under funding and have battled to keep going.

It is a tribute to the people involved that these stations have been operational for as long as they have. From Pruitt's account, the spirit of camaraderie, companionship, and sense of community engendered in people who have worked at the field station is strong. Pruitt makes it clear that an attitude of "make do" rules at the Taiga Biological Station, with creative scrounging of materials and supplies from unlikely sources and a great deal of "sweat equity" contributed by students and volunteers. I expect that almost every researcher involved in a field-based science or natural history in Canada can only smile wryly in empathy.

The most striking aspect of this book is the presentation of the information. The account is given in two languages with the text arranged in parallel columns, English to the left and Russian to the right, with equivalent paragraphs lined up. This is an interesting approach, though I imagine that very few North American readers will be able to read both languages. Moreover, it makes the book twice as long as it needs to be and therefore probably increases its price. The book is well-produced, on high-quality glossy paper, with 78 photographs, 72 of which are in colour, and robust binding. However, the list price is outrageous for such a slender volume and, unfortunately, will probably severely limit its distribution.

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Democracy's Dilemma: Environment, Social Equity, and the Global Economy

By R Paehlke. 2004. MIT Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 306 pages. U.S.\$ 16.95 Paper

"Many have a sense that governments are increasingly out of control". This book tackles this complex topic. It is written by one of the leading environmental thinkers and deals with major issues of globalization. Simply by assessing the global state of Forests, Topsoil, Biodiversity, Fisheries, Groundwater and Fossil Fuel, it becomes immediately obvious that we are borrowing the assets from future generations. As Paehlke states, these depressive facts are a logic conclusion when acting under the paradigm of "externalizing internal costs", which is the result of a mis-lead economy promoted by the current view and definition of globalization. Here we get convincingly reminded about the significant political error made in the 90s that "unfettered" markets would be the only way to economic and all other forms of societal success.

The book is divided into eight chapters and subsections which convince that "the assumption that economic expansion will fill our lives with sunshine" is faulty. As examples from India and U.S. indicate, wealthier nations are not the healthier ones. Nicely, the book describes features of our current society: volunteer organ-

izations and voting are in decline; political cynicism is all too normal due to the powerlessness of citizens.

Besides a nice overview and introduction of globalization issues, subsequent chapters deal with the media: the TV is at the heart of globalization, asking us permanently to consume and to be entertained. Paehlke presents how this media is controlled by corporations, and thus not delivering conflicting or alternative messages. Instead, it just focuses in a stereotypical way on natural disasters, accidents and arrests. Despite information technology, we are actually living in an age of "missing information": Electronic media systematically avoids intellectual content in favor of visuals. Further, it is shown in this important book that the public Post Service deteriorated to an advertising bombardment infrastructure fueled by international corporations. In the U.S. alone, seventeen billion catalogues (64 for every man, woman and child) are mailed each year! Paehlke demands instead that the right of participatory access should be more often open to non-commercial interests and that individuals should have the right to establish some autonomy from commercial messages and images.

One entire chapter deals with a 'Three-Bottom-Line Perspective' which eludes to the fact that "There has