

of the data. What was needed was Acorn's book, or listening to field entomologists, during the planning process. The discussion continues with an assessment of the Evans' hypothesis that native species have constricted their range to ancestral habitats, that is have become less common in extensively human altered habitats (farmland and suburbia) after the arrival of introduced species such as the seven-spotted lady beetle. Refreshingly, he is able to present his own data to support his views. His views about ecological change, conservation and invasion biology are clear, logical and worthy of discussion.

The style deserves special mention. It is highly credible, yet at the same time there is a breath of whimsy and fireside chattiness. A fine example is the description of taste-testing. You will not look at a brightly coloured lady beetle the same after you read this.

What bothered me during my initial readings? The first was that I wanted more detail, more data. But, this is a book for generalists and not the appropriate place for the level of detail I want. Second were those couplets. Each species account includes a quirky, rhyming couplet. I did not understand many at first, but they did grow on me. Perhaps they are like beer, an acquired taste. Third were the common names. The Entomological Society of Canada is working to provide consistent, standard common names for insects, just like we

have for birds. However, many were ignored, for example *Mulsantina picta* here is the Painted Ladybug, not pine lady beetle. However, some of the newly coined names hit the nail on the head and deserve to be maintained. My favourite was the Once-squashed Ladybug, a cryptic species in the same genus as the Twice-stabbed Ladybug. Yes, it needs to be squashed on a microscope slide to examine its chromosomes in order to be identified. Brilliant. These are minor complaints. The identification sections are worth the whole price of the book. The discussion of introduced species is worth the whole price of the book. The description of how to taste a ladybug to assess its palatability is worth the whole price of the book.

Our understanding of foods, habitat use and phenology (seasonal activity) is not as well developed in North America as it is in Great Britain and Europe. People armed with this guide, will have the tools to be at the forefront in remedying this situation. Compilations often function as a catalyst for a quantum leap in interest and new findings by curious naturalists. I predict this book will provide another great example in western Canada.

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A New World of Animals: Early Modern Europeans on the Creatures of Iberian America

By Miguel de Asua and Roger French. 2005. Ashgate Publishing Ltd., Aldershot, England. 235 pages. \$89.95

How would you describe a beaver to someone who has never seen a beaver? Is it simply a 20 kg rat with thick fur and with something that has the texture and consistency of an elephant's ear sticking out of its backside? That person to whom you are giving the description might be forgiven for disbelieving you. What about a whole forest of new animals including muskrats, otters, woodchucks, skunks and any of the larger forest-dwelling species? In North America we have an abundance of animals which were unknown in the Old World before European exploration. Combine these animals with their South American counterparts and add birds, reptiles, amphibians, and insects known only to the New World and you have the basis for the book given to us from Miguel de Asua.

For the history buff and the technophile who wants to track down the classic literature of the conquest of the Americas, this book is a new door to obscure literature of natural history. Miguel de Asua is an Argentinian professor at the Universidad Nacional de San Martin and Roger French was English, from the department of History and Philosophy of Science at Cambridge University, UK. Their work focuses on the animals found by early explorers of the Americas, particularly South America though reference is made to animals

occurring in North America as well. The reader is introduced to many of the early writers describing the newly discovered lands, and emphasis is placed on the animals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and insects which the authors noted at the time.

From the earliest explorers, Columbus and his followers, the discovery of the New World has been a discovery of the beauty and ferocity of many new and exciting creatures. Columbus returned with birds, skins and many stories trying to describe the richness of nature which he found and impress his audiences with tales of strange and exciting beasts. Written accounts which survived from his time sought to identify the animals, birds and reptiles using the experience of known animals and the descriptions are interesting associations with European and Asian animal forms put together to construct forms which would be within the experience of the audience. So bison looked like camels or cows, armadillos looked like striped foxes and manatees looked like large puppies.

For two hundred years the animals of the New World were exotic, unique and objects of wonder in Europe. Even as the years rolled on with more and more literature being accumulated from explorers, naturalists and then colonists with animals imported into Europe as exotic pets and zoo specimens, the earliest descriptions survived and were repeated. De Asua takes us on a literature search, naming writers, quoting their writ-

ings and showing the parallels as information, disinformation and wild speculation was accumulated, repeated and refuted.

This is a new study of scientific literature because of its origins and perspectives. First of all it is centred on South America with only some brief mentions of North American mammals. Secondly it is restricted to the writers first in Spanish then in central Europe, all of whom wrote in their own language for audiences in their local areas. Only toward the end of the literature covered in the book are we introduced to English sources though the names are obscure here as well. A good conclusion is added where the ideas of the sailors, soldiers, functionaries, friars and adventurers each had their day and their utility in telling a part of the natural

history story. The opinions and wisdom of the native peoples of the Americas are not given much consideration because of course they did not write to Europe and the conquerors formed their own opinions based on the utility of the natural wildlife to their own needs, not the inherent worth of the ages of native wisdom.

This is neither an easy book to read nor a simple historical storybook. It is a history of intellectual thought and discovery. There are many gems of thought included but the reader needs to be attentive to the thesis of the writer not simply to the many repetitions of the details.

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Penguins of the World

By Wayne Lynch. 2007. Firefly Books, 66 Leek Crescent, Richmond Hill, Ontario L4B 1H1 Canada. 175 pages. U.S.\$24.95. Paper.

If you take one of the most photogenic birds in the world, living in the most pristine habitat and send forth a remarkable photographer, can you fail? No!

The hard part about penguins is getting to where they live. Then anyone can point- and-shoot and get a fine photo. The appearance of penguins is so charming that failure is not an option. A quick thumb through the photos in this book will show how Lynch can take such a good photo opportunity and make the result magnificent.

But let us look at the text first. In a smooth flowing narrative the author takes us through the lives of the world's 17 penguin species. He covers the origins and ancestry of this long-lived family. Most intriguing is Lynch's description of a five foot seven inch prehistoric bird. Now that would have been a sight! The author explains why penguins are shaped the way they are and the uniqueness of their adaptation to sea life. He describes their habitat. You may be surprised to realise that most species live in the temperate [not polar] region. With humour, he explains their sex lives and the advantages of their marriage and divorce systems. He follows their lives from egg to adulthood. In all of this he makes these birds sound human. Or is it that we humans are like penguins – after all they have a much longer lineage?

From sex to family life, from feeding to predators the author weaves a delightful tale of the delightful creatures. In addition you will get to know some of the penguins, sometimes less-than-delightful, neighbours. Only a photographer as good as Lynch could make a

pair of Sheathbills look cuddly. He also adds a chapter on the northern counterpart of penguins, the alcid.

An appendix lists all the penguin species, with a range map and photo for each one. This is not a field guide as there is no species description. There is, however, a small photo of an adult. The range maps and distribution notes are clear and useful. Lynch notes the population size and the species status. These range from a scant 1000 or more pairs of Galapagos Penguins to 10 million Macaronis.

The photographs are wonderful. Many of them are so balanced in format as to look posed. This speaks of the infinite patience and possibly some good luck that Lynch had on his trips. One notable point is the sunshine. In my trips to polar regions I rarely see the sun, yet many of his photos bask in glorious light – more patience I think. There is a photo of a braying penguin showing the backward-facing spikes on his tongue in remarkable detail. There are numerous portraits of chicks, with and without parents, that are irresistibly charming.

I have seen 10 out of the 17 living species. To see six of the remaining species I must visit New Zealand and the islands that lie to its south, a difficult and very expensive area to reach. But the lure for a penguinophile is undeniably very strong. However, if you have never seen wild penguins and are not likely to do so, then this book is the next best thing. Buy it and enjoy it, for only the smell is missing.

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