

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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