

A Photographic Guide to Seashore Life in the North Atlantic – Canada to Cape Cod

By J. D. Sept. 2008. Princeton University Press, 41 William St., Princeton, New Jersey 08540 USA 224 pages. 19.95 USD.

I have long believed that a real naturalist is interested in all life. Some of my birder friends refer to the plants that birds perch on as “green stuff.” I think that such an attitude is a sad loss because there are many wonderful, non-avian things to see on this earth. There are a lot of top quality choices for books on birds, plants and mammals. There is a more modest choice for reptiles, butterflies and dragonflies. There is not much available, however, on seashore life, so any book is welcome. Sept’s guide covers most of the common species found on rocky shores, sandy shores, mud beaches, and floating docks.

This guide covers a wide range of organisms from worms, jellies and sea anemones, through clams and crabs, to seaweeds, lichens and seashore plants. Indeed, the author portrays examples from 15 phyla. With the introductory section it is a Course 101 for shore life. Each species is illustrated with high quality, clear photographs, supported by well-written text. The author often uses the correct scientific term but adds a simple explanation in parentheses [phycoerythrin (algal red pigment)] making the text easy to follow.

This book brings back memories of many old “friends.” The Moon Jellies and Beroe’s Comb Jellies I saw floating off shore, the limpets, sea-snails and whelks in the tide pools and the Knotted Wrack cascading off the rocks. It reminded me of one of the most fascinating presentations I ever experienced. It was an explanation of the sex life of seaweed given in a swirling rock pool just behind the Peggy’s Cove lighthouse. While the author does not give this complex story *per se* there are hints in some of the algae accounts.

The book includes about 225 common species. I estimate that if you walked for an hour along a typi-

cal Nova Scotia beach you could find 20 to 30 species with ease. As the book is only 21.5 × 14 × 1.5 cm it would be easy to carry along. For the Common Periwinkle [a very tasty little beast] the photographs give a good sense of size, colour, shape and variability. These are easy to compare with the photographs of the Smooth and Rough periwinkles. Nearby you might find a beige “seaweed” made of felt. Look up Leafy Bryozoan. Push through the wrack and you will likely find a few scud, little shrimp-like critters. Keep going and you will surely find some young Rock Crabs or one of the hermit crabs. Now I have an urge to get to a beach and try poking around with this book in hand. The trouble is I am off to the Pacific next.

The author gives a brief overview of various intertidal habitats, such as sand beaches, mud flats, rocky shores and other micro-habitats. He also includes a guide to the best places in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts. While the locations given are very good, almost anywhere along the coast will have a good range of species.

As much as I enjoyed this book, there is one disappointment. The author did not include any plankton. The zooplankton from the Bay of Fundy are among the most beautiful creatures on earth. Surely someone can buy one of the new digital microscopes and create a book on this neglected part of wildlife.

For \$20 this book is a great buy. Useful and useable, it will be an asset to any naturalist who wants to understand shore life in full. Better yet take a child along and get them interested – tidal pool creatures are easier to observe than flying birds or diving mammals.

A visit to Sept’s website at <http://www.septphoto.com> is also worth the effort.

ROY JOHN

2193 Emard Crescent, Beacon Hill North, Gloucester, Ontario
K1J 6K5 Canada

BOTANY

Glistening Carnivores: The Sticky-Leaved Insect-Eating Plants

By Stewart McPherson. 2008. Redfern Natural History Productions, Poole, Dorset, England. 392 pages, 79.99 USD, Cloth.

Stewart McPherson must love carnivorous plants. This is his sixth book dedicated to plants that catch, kill and digest insects – and even small animals, if you will. McPherson’s earlier works, all published by Redfern Natural History Productions, focused on the global diversity and ecology of the carnivorous plants. Three volumes were dedicated to the pitcher plants the largest and most spectacular of carnivorous plants.

His most recent volume highlights the sticky-leaved, insect-eating plants whose specialized leaves secrete sparkling droplets of sticky glue that trap insects; beauty to the human eye, but a drop of death to the unwary insect.

It was none other than Charles Darwin who definitively established the insectivorous or carnivorous nature of *Drosera* in his work *Insectivorous Plants* published in 1875. McPherson’s first chapter considers this relatively unknown passion of Charles Darwin. Subsequent chapters examine the botanical clas-