

Sadly, Lord's obituaries varied "from the inaccurate to the fanciful or wildly untrue," while authors of recent articles about Lord have been guilty of "the facile repetition of statements made by preceding authors without any evident attempt to ascertain the truth."

In addition to 13 pages about the boundary commission, Baker tells us about Lord's travels to Egypt and his final position as manager of the Brighton Aquarium, cut short by illness, and of his untimely death at age 53. Baker lists the six species named for Lord, as well as the British Museum's specimens he collected along the southern Canadian boundary. There are six pages of references, twelve of footnotes, and

two of acknowledgments. This is much the best biographical reference available concerning a little-known naturalist of importance to Canada. It will be of interest to natural historians and belongs in each university library.

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*Lord, John Keast. 1866. *A naturalist in Vancouver Island and British Columbia*. 2 volumes. Richard Bentley, London.

When the Wild Comes Leaping Up: Personal Encounters with Nature

Edited by David Suzuki. 2002. Greystone Books, Vancouver. 235 pp. \$32.95.

When the Wild Comes Leaping Up – what a great title. Different, attention-grabbing, dynamic. Those who spend time in the wild can identify – they've felt it leap up many times, like the sub-title, *Personal Encounters with Nature* suggests.

And so I opened the book with great anticipation, expecting to be swept away by one gripping story after another. I was also hoping it would be a collection of Canadian writing, but it wasn't. And it wasn't always that gripping either, because the pieces were very different. Some grabbed me from the beginning and held onto me all the way through with their splendid stories and excellent writing. Others, more intellectual or more rambling (sometimes quite long), reached out less assertively, making me work to enter into the story, sometimes getting a hold of me, sometimes not. Still others did nothing at all for me, although I read each piece from start to finish.

But I'm not going to talk about those. I'm going to tell you about the two stories that gripped me most strongly, and let you decide on the rest of the pieces for yourself if you end up reading the book.

The first was Bill McKibbon's "A Desperate Clarity," about a an unforgettable and dangerous experience he had hiking in the woods behind his house in the Adirondacks. As he points out, it was not an encounter with a large carnivore, or a poisonous snake, or even poison ivy. He stepped on a nest of yellow jackets.

It happened while he was climbing a very steep slope. He writes, "all of sudden, there was the most unbelievable pain washing up my stomach toward my neck. It came so fast, as pure a splash of feeling as if someone had tossed a pot of boiling water in my direction. And it hurt so much, a purity of pain I've never experienced before or since. In my memory it expresses itself almost as a flash of white light."

He describes his desperate plunge back down toward home — his rapidly swelling torso, his rising panic — only to be seized by what he calls a "remarkable set of emotions" and awareness which blurred the boundaries between himself and the world around him. He describes his reactions to things he perceives along the way, feeling genuinely a part of it all — a "high" — before his trip to the hospital. When he returns, things did not return to normal.

"It was as if the tears of pain had irrigated my eyes," he writes, "and for weeks afterward the world seemed in sharper focus whenever I stepped outside.... The layers of insulation between me and the real world had been removed, and now the breeze was whistling through. You could say this new state has a dreamlike quality, but it would have been more accurate to say just the opposite—that it felt as if I had woken up from a dream."

He finishes the story with the following lines: "It is a sorry thing to admit that you're so thick it takes seventy-six yellow jacket bites to pierce you.... But the lesson was well worth the price — that desperate clarity was one of the greatest gifts the world ever gave me. When I try to imagine the holy spirit, I hear buzzing."

Bill McKibbon writes superbly. And he writes honestly. In his story the wild leaps up, literally and figuratively, to give him an unforgettable, illuminating experience — an epiphany. I could probably say, and you can probably tell, it was my favourite story.

The other story that really gripped me was also about an epiphany. In fact, that word is in the title, "Catching an Epiphany." The story is by the editor of the book, David Suzuki, and it, like Bill McKibbon's piece, is about, as Suzuki writes, "my moment of enlightenment."

It is a charming, autobiographical story about excitement associated with the outdoors, particularly fishing. "My very first childhood memory," Suzuki writes, "is one of almost unbearable excitement — my father and

I went to a store to buy a tent so that we could go camping.” That camping trip led to a passion for fishing, carried through childhood on the west coast and internment in British Columbia’s interior during the second world war, to a new postwar life in Ontario, with continuing outdoor experiences in, as he writes, “the pockets of nature that still flourished” in a much more human-dominated landscape.

His epiphany comes when, back in British Columbia with his young family, he takes his son and daughter to a fishing place he heard about: “a logging road near Squamish that would take us to a river that was supposed to contain good-sized rainbows.” It wasn’t the fish that were unforgettable that day. It was the long, hot hike in from the road, through “a combat zone where the soil had been churned up by the tracks of heavy machines, and all that remained of the immense trees were huge stumps and roots that projected at garish angles among the slash” and the transition to the remaining forest.

“Stepping out of the glare and heat of the clearing and into the dark, cool cathedral of trees was an absolute shock, like stepping from a hot city street into an air-conditioned building. Embraced by the cool shade of the trees, we inhaled the damp, musky odour of vegetation and decaying tree carcasses. We were enfolded in silence. The children immediately stopped bickering and complaining and began to whisper just as if they were in a church.... I was dumbstruck.... In those few minutes that my children and I had entered

into the forest temple, I had recognized the terrible hubris of the human economy.”

Looking back through the many memorable and formative experiences of his life, Suzuki realizes that “that inspirational encounter”, as he calls it, “with an ancient forest on the edge of a clear-cut was my moment of enlightenment.” He finishes with the following lines, “the forest that was my epiphany was felled within weeks of my visit there. What remains is my conviction that we must rediscover our biological place and learn to live in balance with the natural world that sustains us.”

These stories were, as the lines on the back cover express, “beautifully written and deeply felt ... testimonies to the transformative powers of the natural world.” I was hoping all the pieces in the collection would measure up to that description, but they didn’t – for me anyway – though some were more powerful than others. It may simply be a question of personal taste.

I would definitely recommend *When the Wild Comes Leaping Up*. Suzuki’s excellent introduction and story, along with McKibbon’s piece, make the entire book worth reading. And they get you thinking about your own personal encounters with nature – another rewarding experience.

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Charles Darwin, The Power of Place

By J. Browne. 2002. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 591 pp., illus. U.S. \$37.50.

In 1881, at the science gathering of the British Association, Sir John Lubbock (1834-1913) was able to observe “the book of Nature was like some missal richly illuminated, but written in an unknown tongue” (page 95; *Fifty Years of Science*, 1895, MacMillan and Co., London), referring to the general consensus prior to the publication of *Origin of Species*. “The graceful form of the letters” he continued, “the beauty of the coloring, excited our wonder and admiration; but of the true meaning little was known...” Much of this was cleared up, or at least shown in the proper light not only with Darwin’s published work, but by how Darwin meandered in and around the scientific and social community, and with how he directed his science. He, after all, had a vested interest in the long term viability of his theories, his “children” as he sometimes called them. A year after Lubbock’s comments, Charles Darwin died.

Janet Browne’s much anticipated sequel to the Darwinian saga documents the “father” of natural selection

as well as his “children”. Her earlier volume, *Charles Darwin, Voyaging* (Princeton University Press, 1996) chronologically ended with the publication of the *On the Origin of Species* in 1859. In many respects, as the result of her craftsmanship in story-building ending at a pivotal point in Darwin’s life, the reader was left in a cliff-hanger state (see Tokaryk 1998), even though his remaining years are well known. Her recent submission, *Charles Darwin, The Power of Place* is a seamless continuation of the earlier volume and duplicates its effort and effect on the reader as a well researched story.

It should be noted that much of *The Power of Place* is as much about Victorian/Edwardian science, politics, society, and religion, as it is of Darwin himself. For Darwin’s life occupied an ideal time when educational reform provided opportunities for young and old; the birth of the “professional” science as it chipped away at the “amateurish” tower of enlightenment [By definition I refer to these individuals having as much clout, connections, and good breeding as intellect. But let’s not forget that Darwin was part of this amateur group as well, holding no professional chair, and producing