

*obsoleta* and the consequent elevation of *E. o. spiloides* to a species (as *Elaphe Spiloides*) which now includes all Ontario populations (Burbink et al. 2000; Burbink 2001).

The book concludes with a four-page Glossary presenting an English translation for genus, species, and subspecific names, and an 102-page Bibliography. I did not note any more recent than the year 2000. Citations in the species accounts reference sources for most but the more general statements allowing them to be verified and/or searched for additional information.

Its through synthesis of the literature will make this

a standard reference for years to come for both researchers and naturalists with any interest in snakes.

#### Literature Cited

- Burbink, E. T. 2001. Systematics of the eastern rat snake complex (*Elaphe obsoleta*). Herpetological Monographs 15: 1-53.  
Burbink, E. T., R. Lawson, and J. B. Slowinski. 2000. Mitochondrial DNA phylogeography of the polytypic North American rat snake (*Elaphe obsoleta*): a critique of the subspecies concept. Evolution 54(6): 2107-2118.

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## BOTANY

### The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Trees

By David More and John White. 2002. Timber Press, Inc., 133 S.W. Second Avenue, Suite 450, Portland, Oregon 97204-3527, USA www.timberpress.com; hardcover, 800 pages. U.S. \$79.95.

This is an absolutely beautiful book. Usually with one and a half pages per species are presented: painted illustrations of trees, flowers, fruits and leaves, often at different stages in spring, summer, fall and winter "found in Britain, France, Germany and the Low Countries – common or rare, native or introduced, growing wild or cultivated in arboreta, parks and gardens", by artist David More.

The accompanying text written by John White describes the native range of each species, approximate time of its introduction into cultivation, where it came from, the preferable habitat, various cultivars and various additional interesting information.

All of this is in family sequence beginning with the Ginkgo family and ending with the Palm family. Over 1000 species are treated.

The book begins with a Table of Contents of two pages, two pages of Foreword and an Introduction of eleven pages with descriptive information including a list of trees for problem sites or special needs. It is completed by a Glossary, an Index of Scientific Names and an Index of Common Names. Its weight is about six pounds and for that reason should be best either kept at home or in an office and not carried into a garden or arboretum.

One thing that was not mentioned in the text is the possibility of a cultivated tree species invading into open or non-cultivated areas. Three species that have spread extensively in some areas in the vicinity of Toronto are Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*), Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*) and Norway Maple (*Acer platanoides*).

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### Carnivorous Plants of the United States and Canada: Second Edition

By Donald E. Schnell. 2002. Timber Press, Inc. Portland, Oregon. 468 pages. U.S. \$39.95.

This book contains a wealth of information and absolutely beautiful colour pictures of 55 carnivorous plants which occur in the United States and Canada, some as far north as the Northwest Territories, Yukon and Alaska. It is a tremendous step ahead of the author's first edition which was published by John F. Blair in 1976 and numbered 125 pages.

In the new edition, there is a short three-page Preface in which the author calls attention to the changes, developments and explanations in the following text, the elimination of the cultivation chapter, comments about the photographs and thanks to many unnamed individuals and especially to his wife, Brenda.

The next 68 pages are devoted to Carnivorous Plants: An Introduction under the following headings: Carnivorous or Insectivorous, General Characteristics Related to Habitat, Must Carnivorous Plants be Carnivorous? Trapping Mechanisms, How Traps Attract Prey, Carnivorous Plant Communities, Carnivorous Plant Habitats, and Some General Notes on Cultivating Carnivorous Plants. All of these sections contain interesting information.

This is followed by the chapters Venus Flytrap, Eastern North American Pitcher Plants, California Pitcher Plant, Sundews, Butterworts, Bladderworts and Other Possible Carnivorous Seed Plants. Within each of these chapters is easy to read information on the families, genera and species, scientific names, and common names, descriptions, flowering seasons, dis-

tribution, habitats, variations, pollination trapping mechanisms and other interesting information. For anyone with botanical interests this is a most worthwhile contribution.

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## An Eclectic Guide to Trees East of the Rockies

By Glen Blouin. 2001. Boston Mills Press, Erin, Ontario. 280 pages. \$29.95.

If you like trees, you must read this book. Actually, if you like trees, you will want to acquire a copy of *An Eclectic Guide to Trees East of the Rockies* for your very own. Abounding with the sort of information identification books don't have room to accommodate, it is an excellent complement to the usual tree field guides.

Glen Blouin loves trees. It's obvious. He writes about them with a tenderness and passion that makes the book hard to put down once you start reading. And he has come to know each tree species so thoroughly (based on considerable experience and research) that he presents details and tidbits you will be hard pressed to find elsewhere between the same covers.

Blouin starts each species profile with an identification page. This section provides the tree's scientific and common name, plus other names in English and French. It also includes the name for the tree in one of North America's many Aboriginal languages. White Birch in Woods Cree, for example, is *waskway*; Hickory in Cayuga, *onenoga*; Red Oak in Pawnee, *nahata-pahat*; Black Ash in Mohawk, *ehsa*; Tamarak in Abenaki, *akemantak*; White Spruce in Ojibway, *zese-gaandag*; Chokecherry in Assiniboin, *champah*; Eastern Hemlock in Onondaga, *o-ne-tah*; White Elm in Shawnee, *hani:pi*.

The identification spread also includes a description of the tree's leaf, flower, fruit, twig, bark, wood, height, diameter, and longevity, plus the first of multiple photographs scattered throughout the species profile.

But my favourite part of each profile comes after the identification page. That's where Blouin presents the "eclectic" information which makes this book so extraordinary. For each species, he covers any combination of the following: the tree's history and use by humans, suitability to woodworking and other industrial pur-

poses, traditional uses by Aboriginal North Americans, importance to wildlife and ecosystems, ornamental use and propagation, natural enemies like pests and diseases, conservation issues, and more — the sort of things Blouin calls "relevant digressions." These species profiles reveal each tree as a fascinating character and significant member of a greater community of life.

Here are some facts and figures I found fascinating. The White Elm's leaves are rich in iron, potassium and calcium; and they decompose quickly to improve the soil. Willows apparently interbreed and hybridize freely, making it very difficult to identify individuals with certainty. A fungal disease is seriously threatening the survival of Butternuts in North America; there is fear, in fact, that the butternut might go the way of the American Chestnut. Jack Pine stands on Michigan's lower peninsula are one of the last remaining nesting habitats for the highly endangered Kirtland's Warbler. Small Eastern Hemlocks can exist up to 200 years in the forest understorey, waiting for shorter-lived trees to die and provide conditions for the smaller hemlocks to shoot upwards. Various conifers vie for the distinction of having provided Jacques Cartier with a cure for scurvy. Cottonwoods are the fastest growing native tree east of the Rockies. And Striped Maple leaves provide soft and strong toilet paper in the bush.

That's only a brief sampling of the wonderfully diverse information presented in this eclectic guide to trees east of the Rocky Mountains. My only complaint is that there's no index. Perhaps the publishing budget ran short of money. Perhaps the wide-ranging nature of the content would have made indexing problematic. There's probably a good reason why an index was not included. But I sure miss it, particularly when I'm looking for a particular nugget of information among all those tidbits.

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