

There is a four- or five-page interesting introduction at the front of each book and an index, glossary and a list of Additional Field Guides available from Harbour Publishing at the end. There are most interesting pictures on the front covers of each book. On the back covers there is a note about the author, Dr. Lewis J. Clark, together with a map of the Pacific Northwest on which there are shaded areas depicting where the wild flowers can be found. All are elegant.

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MISCELLANEOUS

The Canoe: A Living Tradition

By John Jennings. Firefly Books, Toronto. 272 pages. \$59.95.

There could hardly be a more poetic way to explore the natural world than by canoe. While not all observers of natural history are canoeists, most canoeists have respect for and curiosity about nature. Indeed, a loon's call or the slap of a beaver's tail, accompanied by the quiet burbling of a canoe's wake, has served as an introduction to the contemplation of nature for countless North Americans.

The Canoe: A Living Tradition is, in a sense, a natural history of traditional North American watercraft. Included in this beautifully illustrated, coffee table-sized book are chapters dedicated to the history and construction of birch bark and dugout canoes, as well as skin kayaks and umiaks (large, open vessels from the Canadian Arctic). This book also discusses the influence of canoes on the fur trade and the settlement of northern North America, as well as the development of recreational canoes and the preservation of canoe history in more recent times. A respected expert writes each chapter on the type of craft or historical context being discussed. This makes for inconsistent writing at times, but also gives the book an authority that would not have been achieved by a single author. I found that the technical details about the dimensions (i.e., width and length, etc.) of canoes a bit repetitive. On the other hand, the documentation of these measurements may be valuable in the future. As John

Jennings notes in the first chapter, the original canoe designs of several First Nations in North America have

been erased without a trace, a poignant reminder of the terrible loss of traditional knowledge that continues to this day.

While the book brilliantly covers the historical context of canoeing and canoe building (over the span of 230 pages), it pays scant attention to modern uses of the canoe (2 pages). After all, as the title suggests, canoeing and canoe building is a "living tradition". Canoeing is still one of the most elegant ways to explore nature and there are many fine canoe builders in North America currently manufacturing modern and traditional canoes from a wide range of natural and synthetic materials. It seems as though a chapter could have been devoted to recent developments in the design and construction of modern canoes.

The book gives a good overview of how birch bark and dugout canoes are constructed, including useful photographic illustrations; however, before you run out and start assembling materials, take heed: the information provided is insufficient for the "do it yourself" canoe builder. A noticeable shortcoming is the omission of information about the many resources available to those interested in building traditional

birch bark and dugout canoes, as well as skin kayaks. For instance, while the book contains a photograph of a canoe built by César Nawashish, it fails to reference the excellent 1971 National Film Board film "César's Bark Canoe", which documents Nawashish's completion of a bark canoe with exquisite detail. Other contemporary builders of traditional craft have also produced thorough "how to" publications on building birch bark canoes and skin kayaks including David Gidmark, Robert Morris and Wolfgang Brink, which have not been referenced in this book.

While Adney and Chapelle's *Bark Canoes and Skin Boats of North America* will remain the bible of traditional canoe and kayak design, *The Canoe: A Living Tradition* is broader (literally and figuratively), more colourful and more accessible. It is simply irresistible for the canoe enthusiast. Its shortcomings are few and its design and production qualities are excellent. In summary, it is a valuable addition to the annals of canoe culture. Congratulations to John Jennings and the Canadian Canoe Museum for their fine work.

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