

Guidelines for Book Reviews in *The Canadian Field-Naturalist*

Thank you for your interest in reviewing books for *The Canadian Field-Naturalist* (CFN). The guidelines below lay out our expectations for your review. Should they seem daunting, please keep in mind that the key word is ‘guidelines’, not ‘instructions’!

Publishers provide books in the hope that they will be reviewed and that reviews will be published in a reasonable amount of time. Thus, we ask reviewers to submit their reviews **within 2 to 3 months** of receiving the book.

A book review is different from a book report. The latter is used to describe the contents of a book in thematic detail. While your review should tell us what the book is about, the heart of a good review is your critical evaluation of the book. Various questions should be kept in mind to achieve this, including (but not limited to):

- What kind of book is it (memoir, scholarly, popular, part of a series, field guide)?
- For whom is the book intended?
- What are the author’s objectives, and are they met?
- Are the book’s arguments and theses well presented?
- What are the book’s major merits and possible shortcomings or weaknesses?
- If the book is a subsequent edition, how does it differ from previous edition(s)?

Quotations may be made from the book to aid in your analysis. These should be kept short and to the point, with page numbers in brackets, thus: “brief quotation” (p. xx or pp. xx–xx). Please do not quote book jackets and other reviews—your analysis must be based on your reading of the book. Comments on the author’s background, expertise, and writing style are welcome. Note-taking and developing a thesis about the book early in your reading may be helpful when it comes to writing up your assessment. And even before you begin reading the book, checking its preface, table of contents, and back matter such as end-notes, bibliography, and index should provide a good feel for it.

The purpose of a review is to evaluate a book such that others can decide whether it is worth their time and money. At CFN, we are particularly interested in assessments of the book’s relevance and value to field naturalists as well as any Canadian connections it may have. Whether or not you can recommend the book, and to whom you would recommend it, are important elements of your review.

Reviews should be about **500–1000 words** in length. Please remember that quality is better—and more difficult to achieve!—than quantity. Although Microsoft Word is preferred, the word processor used is up to you. The book’s full title and publisher information, including number of pages, price, and binding, should be at the top, as per CFN style (see past book reviews for an example of CFN style); no other title is necessary. Any literature cited in your review should be noted in a list of ‘Literature Cited’ at the end of the review, following your name and affiliation / home city. Keep in mind that your review is about the book you have read, not an essay on the subject field or an extensive commentary on your personal activities in the subject area. We recommend taking a look at past book reviews (which are all free to access) in the CFN archives to get a better sense of what we’re after:

<https://www.canadianfieldnaturalist.ca/index.php/cfn/issue/archive>.

We encourage reviewers to submit their reviews through the OJS submission system at the CFN website: <https://www.canadianfieldnaturalist.ca/index.php/cfn/login>. After logging in, click the “New Submission” link on the right side of the webpage and follow the prompts. Reviewers must register for a CFN account at <http://www.canadianfieldnaturalist.ca/index.php/cfn/user/register> in order to submit a review. If you prefer, however, you may email your review to the Book Review Editor, Jessica Sims, at bookrevieweditor@canadianfieldnaturalist.ca with a short version of the title in the subject heading.

Reviews go through an editorial process, including formatting, copy-editing, and proofreading. The first step in this process should be taken by you, the reviewer! Reviews deemed over-length will be shortened. Should major editing be required, your review will be returned by email for your approval and final changes.

All reviewers retain full copyright of their work, and there are no page charges to publish book reviews in CFN. The book reviews that we publish are Open Access (OA), meaning they are not behind a paywall.

Thanks again for accepting the responsibility of preparing a review for our journal. The quality and reputation of CFN depend on its many contributors. We appreciate your efforts.