

Book Reviews

Ecology

THE CURIOUS NATURALIST

by John Mitchell and the Massachusetts Audubon Society. 1980. Prentice-Hall, Incorporated (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey 07632). 140 p. Price not given.

The contents of this book originally appeared in a magazine of the same name published by the Massachusetts Audubon Society and edited by John Mitchell.

The specific information included in the book was selected with the intent of getting the neophyte naturalist out of the house, the library, or the classroom, and into the woods and fields. It is not an identification guide; instead the author tries to provide enough information to pique the curiosity of the user so that s/he will want to further explore the intricacies of a natural habitat. The author's goal is to get individuals to learn about the natural world through personal experiences rather than from books.

The activities, games, ideas, and information included in this handbook are organized by seasons. The suggested activities are those that are most easily done at that time of the year and the organisms featured are those that are most likely to be encountered. Care has been taken to include information that will be useful to anyone exploring the natural areas close to most urban areas, such as old fields, a small woodlot, or a marsh. Consequently, exotic habitats, such as tide pools or mountain tops, and their natural components, have been omitted. The book is designed for use in the northeastern United States.

Each of the four main divisions of the book has an introduction that summarizes the major natural events of the season. This is followed by a sky chart, several pages describing birds that may be encountered during the season, and information about plants and insects of the season. Also included are craft activities that use easily obtained natural materials and suggestions for improving the backyard habitat for wildlife. Each division ends with a general calendar of the natural events of the season. In the autumn section of the book, there is information about gathering wild bird

feed from common plants of the fields, identifying gilled mushrooms found in wooded areas, providing fall care to the vegetable garden, carving apples into doll faces, and drying fall flowers for use in decorations. Approximately 30 similar activities are included for each season. A reference is given for each activity so that more information can be obtained if desired.

The book is attractive. It is printed with a brown ink on beige paper. Each page contains a complete idea or activity. The plants and animals discussed are illustrated with well-done line-drawings, and the text is presented in an informal hand-lettering that gives the book a notebook rather than a textbook appearance. The open format makes it easy to gather information or to locate directions.

The book can be used by parents who wish to introduce their children to the marvels of the natural world. Elementary teachers will also find the book helpful because of the many activities presented and the suggestions for observing many forms of wildlife. The many activities in the book could serve as beginning points for projects of middle school and junior high school students. Properly used, *The Curious Naturalist* should make young naturalists more curious.

Harold G. Liebherr
Nicolet High School
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

BIOGEOGRAPHY: AN ECOLOGICAL AND EVOLUTIONARY APPROACH

by C. Barry Cox and Peter D. Moore. 3rd ed., 1980. John Wiley and Sons (One Wiley Drive, Somerset, New Jersey 08873). 230 p. \$19.95.

In the preface, the authors state that they are attempting to integrate the three main threads of biogeography. These are: (a) how organisms live together; where they are today; (b) where they live, in what diversity, and how they disperse; and (c) how they came to live where they are today. In doing so, the authors have provided the basic elements of biogeography's connections with ecology, geography, geology, evolutionary history, and economic anthropology.

The opening chapter, "Patterns of Life," covers the fundamental back-

ground of the field and its terminology. This is accomplished by a review of the physical limitations of life and the various aspects of how organisms make a living. Segments of the book dealing with the manner in which organisms have evolved their novel characteristics and the various aspects of isolation of genetic material leading to specific adaptations are well summarized. This information is followed by an extensive examination of isolation and adaptation of species on islands.

Considerable attention is given to examination of geological events, including continental drift, paleomagnetism, sea-floor spreading, and plate tectonics in relation to isolation and dispersal of life forms. Special attention is given to our understanding of glaciation and its role in biogeography.

The concluding chapter, an examination of the history of human influence, is well done, although it includes relatively little attention to the impact of introduced species other than domesticated varieties. The book is well illustrated with examples and figures from a wide variety of species from various parts of the world. Each chapter includes numerous references. It is an attractive and knowledgeably written book and would be an excellent reference text for the biology teacher or serious student. My only real objection to this excellent product is the price.

Richard D. Kelley
Marshall High School
Marshall, Michigan

Evolution

THE STORY OF LIFE: FROM THE BIG BANG TO YOU

by Kim Marshall. 1980. Holt, Rinehart and Winston (338 Madison Avenue, New York 10017). 160 p. \$8.95.

The title of this book accurately depicts the nature and scope of the content. The first six chapters provide brief explanations of the origin of the universe and the origin and evolution of life on this planet. The next eight chapters deal with human evolution, racial differences, cultural evolution, current problems that threaten human survival, and the continuity of life.