

Book Reviews

Emmett L. Wright
Department Editor

BEHAVIOR

ANIMAL PLAY BEHAVIOR

by Robert Fagen. 1981. Oxford University Press (New York). 701 p. \$14.95 softback, \$29.95 hardback.

In this, the first single-authored book on play behavior, Robert Fagen does a first class job of bringing past, present, and future research together. He summarizes past research with a chapter on the natural history of play and a comprehensive reference listing which includes previously overlooked work. He places present research into perspective and attempts to redirect future studies along a more theoretical line. Theory as the basis of future research, rather than the result of experimentation, is questionable, but Fagen insists that we have reached the limits of the experimental approach. The author writes comfortably from years of experience studying and communicating on the subject of play. He presents well-thought-out positions on controversial questions supported by an evolutionary approach common to current behavioral thought.

The only glaring weakness of the

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book lies in the illustrations. There are no pictures of birds exhibiting play, and the remaining class of studied players, mammals, is pictured sparingly. The author laments the shortage of publishable photographs of play and then includes several from his personal collection which are of only marginal quality. If this were not such a visible aspect of the book it could probably pass unnoticed behind the overall excellence of the work.

Fagan does not shirk the responsibility of being the first author of a comprehensive book on play. *Animal Play Behavior* is a landmark summary of the status of play study. In nine appendices the author lists and explains terms, models, characteristics, and definitions of play followed by lists of studied species. The appendices, along with the extensive tables, careful and complete index, and exhaustive reference listing make this an excellent resource book. The writing style could be followed by advanced high school students, but the material would be most appropriate for college students with a behavior background. The book lends itself ideally to a seminar course as the author's well-supported views would make interesting discussion topics. He includes references for both sides of each question allowing a class to retrace his research and draw its own conclusions. The quality and scope of *Animal Play Behavior* make it a must for the library.

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DEVELOPMENT

DEVELOPMENTAL BIOLOGY

by Leon W. Browder. 2nd ed., 1984. Saunders College Publishing (383 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10017). 748 pages. Price not given.

This excellent textbook portrays developmental biology as the study of progressive changes that occur within cells, tissues, and organisms during their life span.

Research has contributed much new information about development in the four years since the first edition of this book appeared. Much of the recent progress is a result of utilizing recombinant DNA to problems of development, and the application of new techniques.

Key experiments upon which our current understanding of development is based, are discussed. As the

preface points out, the text has resulted from the author's experience in teaching developmental biology to upper division undergraduate students who normally have a background in cell biology and genetics.

The format of this book is designed for easy access to the information it contains. Several features of this book make it well organized for all levels of readers. References follow each of the five parts and an extensive index and glossary follows the entire text.

Teachers will find very useful the several boxed essays with details on experimental procedures and other topics relating to the material included in the text.

The author selected material illustrating the major principles of developmental biology. However, individual instructors will find that the textbook lends itself to the introduction of other topics and additional examples.

The author has demonstrated a good understanding of his subject and its relationship to other biological sciences.

This textbook is comprehensive, up-to-date, and accurate, with illustrations that will serve as excellent learning aids conveying understanding to the students.

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ECOLOGY

THE ECOLOGY OF A SUMMER HOUSE

by Vincent G. Dethier. 1984. University of Massachusetts Press. 133 p.

With seeming innocence, the summer bungalow becomes an enchanting host to a group of residents with which the reader becomes intimately familiar. In deference to the title, the author's summer residence in Maine is the study site wherein every nook and cranny reflects the dynamism which is sometimes sought in remote study areas.

As the author guides the reader through a season in the bungalow, it is apparent that it is the human interloper who is at the mercy of the fauna in residence. The wit and ease with which the author recounts this fairy tale-like relationship within the bungalow endears all of the residents to the reader. Drawing from a rich background in entomology, the author's natural curiosity is raised to an art form.