

Unique to this illustrative guide are sections filled with "Notes from the Field" which present a thumb-view photo of each portrayed animal along with the scientific name and significant features that characterize the animal.

Enriching and expanding these vivid graphics are relevant essays by renowned ethologists and conservationists such as Richard Dawkins, Jane Goodall, John Sawhill and George Schaller. Each contributes an enlightening essay commenting on maintenance and preservation of wildlife. In addition, the introduction by William Conway and the notes by Art Wolfe show the participants' commitment and reveal this artistic endeavor to be a labor of love.

Extraordinarily visually appealing, superbly annotated with pertinent information, and supplemented with essays by prominent scientists, **The Living Wild** is a stunning success. The book will introduce readers at all levels – grade school to adult – to our living world. It should be available in all libraries and incorporated within classroom resources. It is indeed a work of art and would appeal to all recipients as a gift of nature!

Prof. Rita Hoots  
Woodland College  
Woodland, California

## PHARMACOGNOSY

**Medicine Quest – In Search of Nature's Healing Secrets.** By Mark J. Plotkin. 2000. Viking (375 Hudson St., New York, NY 10014) 224 pp. Hardback \$22.95.

At a time when alternative medicine is being taken more seriously than ever before, **Medicine Quest** provides an anecdotal account of how ethnobotany and ethnomedicine have allowed the development of new drugs and

alternative therapies. The book is divided into nine chapters and an afterword. In addition there is a selected bibliography for each chapter and an index. Each chapter is an account of the author's personal experiences in his search for nature's healing secrets, mostly in the Amazon region.

A major focus of the book is on how simple wisdom, in particular the one exhibited by shamans, has led to the discovery and/or development of therapeutic approaches. However, the author manages to bring historical tidbits to enrich his narrative thus making this book a page turner. For instance, Chapter Four is titled "Drugs from Bugs" and on p. 78 he explains the properties of a beetle chemical – cantharidin – also known as the notorious "Spanish fly." He also provides his own point of view about the efforts and motives of pharmaceutical companies in their race to dis-

cover new medicinal compounds. The language is very simple and most technical terms are explained in simple words, making this book readily accessible to a wide audience.

In several sections of the book, the author conveys his own views about the knowledge of shamans. Sometimes he portrays them as entities of biblical stature. The book begins and ends with Dr. Plotkin's lament about a frustrating search for a cure for diabetes. The Afterword is impregnated with his own assessment about the future of medicine given the status quo of environmental problems facing us.

This book is of value for biology educators and anyone interested in ethnobotany, alternative medicine or history of medicine. The author effectively manages to raise provocative questions about the future of available medicines,

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alternative medicine and the co-existence of humans within our surroundings.

José Vázquez  
General Studies Program  
New York University  
New York, New York

## MEDICINAL PLANTS

**The Natural History of Medicinal Plants.** By Judith Sumner. 2000. Timber Press (133 SW Second Ave., Ste 450, Portland, OR 97204) 252 pp. Hardback \$24.95.

Herbalism and the use of medicinal plants have become topics of increased interest in recent years. This

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