

and felt. The comprehensive illustrations in *Paper Nights* are filled with light and their glowing colours are reminiscent of the aurora borealis. The expressions on Pikolo's doll-like face are clear (but it is not clear why Pikolo must wear trousers which are three sizes too big).

The Story of Little Quack is about a small, lonely boy named Jackie (a name which, to a listener, is ambiguous about gender) who lives on a farm. Jackie's mother gives him a duck, which follows him everywhere. This is a love story with a happy ending. When the duck disappears, Jackie is sad and the reader worries about whether or not the duck has the capacity to be loyal. However, there are ten good reasons for Little Quack's disappearance, and Jackie calls them quacklings. This story is a joyful affirmation of the bond that can exist between a child and a pet. The illustrations have a carefree quality, and the bold and varied colours are similar to those children might find in their paint sets. The illustrations truly evoke rural life by showing the different farm animals standing, lying, feeding and moving in characteristic ways. *The Story of Little Quack* is beautifully written and there is not a single vague or extraneous word in it.

Muriel Baribeau is a writer who is presently working on a romantic suspense novel.

PHOTOGRAPHIC NATURAL HISTORY BOOKS: PRESCHOOLERS AND BEYOND

See How They Grow: Pig. Bill Ling, photographer. Scholastic Canada, 1993. 21 pp., \$10.95 cloth. ISBN 0-590-74589-1; **See How They Grow: Calf.** Gordon Clayton, photographer. Scholastic Canada, 1993. 21 pp., \$10.95 cloth. ISBN 0-590-74588-3; **Natural History Series: Elephants.** Eric S. Grace. Key Porter Books, 1993. 62 pp., \$18.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55013-448-5.

The two books in the "See How They Grow" series continue the current publishing trend toward photographic picture books for preschoolers. Each book is visually appealing, with brilliant close-up photographs of animals superimposed on a stark, white background. The pages are decorated with borders of charming line drawings of animals and the layout of each page's design shows the publisher's careful attention to creating a high quality graphic product.

However, the text in each item does not reveal a similar attention; it is monotonous and flat. While the photographer is given full credit on the title page, mention of the author and editor, in each case Mary Ling, is hidden on the verso. There are no rhymes or language play to delight young listeners:

I am a calf. I was just born. I am trying to stand up but I am very weak.

Without a captivating text to provide some sort of glue, the child is left only

with a set of “cute” pictures. They are arranged in chronological order, yet the animals under study don’t exhibit the interesting characteristics of human growth. There is not a lot to look at either because the animals have been removed from their natural habitats and placed on the sterile confines of white space.

These books are part of a series of over a dozen *See How They Grow* animal books. Originally published in Great Britain by Dorling Kindersley, they join other such photographic picture books which, while providing extraordinary photos, are coupled with less than ordinary texts. In some cases, the photographs themselves provide challenges and puzzles to children, such as the *My First Look at* series, also by Dorling Kindersley, and there the format works. But in these two items, the format results in books with no lasting appeal to preschoolers.

Elephants, part of Key Porter Books’ Natural History series, is designed for older children and is also noteworthy for excellent photography (credits go to a wide variety of photographers and agencies). In this case, the photographs of the elephants in their natural surroundings make them larger than life and more exciting.

In addition to high-quality photos, diagrams, maps and figures, the text itself is written in an easy-to-understand fashion, without being simplistic. The author conveys a genuine interest in an amazing animal:

Elephants can grow to an awesome size. The tallest elephant ever recorded was about 13 feet high at the shoulder. The heaviest was 12 1/2 tons—more than the weight of a loaded, 72 seat school bus. One ear of an African elephant is big enough to cover your bed!

Arthur Eric Grace holds a Ph.D. in zoology, and has done a superb job of researching his subject and translating the facts into an engaging, authoritative text. He covers the elephant’s evolution, anatomy, behaviour, distribution and habitat, and conservation issues in separate chapters.

As the book will most likely be found as a reference work in an elementary, high school or public library, the addition of a clear subject index is a plus. However, it lacks a bibliography or “suggested reading” section for young researchers wanting to investigate further on their own.

Marilynn Rudi is a librarian at the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Biological Station, St Andrews, N.B. She is the author of *A Guide to Atlantic Canadian Literature in English* and several natural history articles.

ICI

Ici. Collectif, Présentation de Anne-Marie Aubin, Montréal, Éditions Québec/Amérique, 1991. 128 pp., broché. ISBN 2-89037-647-8.

Ici est un collectif de récits à partir d’un thème commun: l’idée d’appartenance à un pays, en l’occurrence, celui du Québec. Anne-Marie Aubin, l’instigatrice