

## INVOLVING CHILDREN IN NATURE STUDY

**Conservation: a thoughtful way of explaining conservation to children.** Robert Ingpen and Margaret Dunkle. MacMillan, 1988. Unpag., \$9.95 cloth. ISBN 0-7715-9312-0; **Vanishing animals of the world.** Clive Roots. Illus. Peter Karsten. Hyperion Press, 1988. 40 pp., \$4.95. paper. ISBN 0-920534-66-X; **Extinct animals of the world.** Clive Roots. Illus. Peter Karsten. Hyperion Press, 1988. 40 pp., \$4.95. paper. ISBN 0-920534-68-6; **Time and Life: fossils tell the earth's story.** George E. Lammers. Illus. Betsy Thorsteinson. Hyperion Press, 1986. 40 pp., \$4.95. paper. ISBN 0-920534-39-2; **Fish: nature stories for children.** Kenneth Doan. Illus. Richard Osen. Hyperion Press, 1986. 40 pp., \$4.95. paper. ISBN 0-920534-41-4; **Trees.** Cora Nelson. Illus. Jeff Nelson. Hyperion Press, 1986. 40 pp., \$4.95. paper. ISBN 0-920534-43-0; **Owls in North America.** Robert Nero. Illus. Aleta Karstad. Hyperion Press, 1987. 40 pp., \$4.95. paper. ISBN 0-920534-42-2; **Butterflies and moths.** Barbara Batulla. Illus. author. Hyperion Press, 1986. 40 pp., \$4.95. paper. ISBN 0-920534-45-7.

*Conservation* is a wonderful resource book, full of ideas for teachers of environmental studies and parents who are prepared to take the time to develop the themes described in the book. The pictures are thought-provoking and beautifully executed.

The sub-title of the book is somewhat misleading as conservation is not really explained in terms most children would understand without some adult guidance. The text is conceptually rather difficult for reading alone by the 6-10-year-olds for whom the book is intended. With the guidance of an instructor, however, the text can become the basis for many things.

It can be the inspiration for a child to picture the world as a home for every living thing, or to list all the good and bad changes made in our cities, towns, streets, or countryside. In the classroom we could first consider what this book says about the Amazonian jungle where so much tree felling leads to possible changes in the ozone layer, and then we could set up a panel discussion. For example, some people want to dam rivers, some want to harvest trees and plant new ones, some want to preserve the wilderness as it is, while others want wilderness but also all the amenities they have at home. By explaining the text in more detail, we should make obvious to the child that some decisions seem relatively easy (for example deciding to save the whales), whereas the decision whether to use nuclear energy for "good" or "bad" reasons is much more complex.

Minor irritations include the misspelling of Margaret Dunkle's surname in the library cataloging data. Also, it is unclear if author Robert Ingpen received the Hans Christian Andersen medal for children's writing for this book or for

another. Nevertheless the lasting impression is of a book that is both useful and thought-provoking. Let us hope it makes everyone who reads it a little more aware of the world and of the importance of conservation practices.

Seven books in The Canadian Album Series and The Wilderness Album Series offer practical tools for helping children develop their interest in nature and in conservation. The series is very good indeed. The format comprises a page of text facing a line drawing of the animal or plant in its environment, which is meant to be coloured in. Facts about each species are integrated meaningfully into stories. The main scientific information is also included after the story for those requiring more detailed information. The covers are appealing, the illustrations alive and yet easy to colour, the text is fun and informative, and at \$4.95 a copy, the price is also very good! For some titles the line drawings inside are featured in colour on the cover, and this seems helpful to children trying to follow the instructions for colouring the drawings. On the other hand, some titles allow a completely free hand in the choice of colours.

In *Trees*, the diagrams are a little sketchy. Silhouettes of the trees and maps showing distribution and range would perhaps have helped with future identification. In the scientific information side of the page, categories such as "Reproduction" or "Habitat" would benefit from being underlined rather than italicized. In *Owls* the drawings show the expressive eyes of the Eastern Screech Owl very clearly, and the sheer size of the Great Horned Owl becomes apparent compared to a child kneeling beside it. Some of the language is a little advanced, e.g., the term "flamulated". The cover of *Butterflies and moths* is very good and the back shows in colour all the species discussed. The tale of the Cecropia Moth tends to be rather anthropomorphic; nevertheless all the main life history details are included. The drawing of caterpillars devouring cabbage lets the reader relate the beautiful white Cabbage Butterfly to pests in a garden. The effect of the Hickory Horned Devil (Regal Moth), a huge caterpillar five inches long, on the boys in the story is well shown; and the fact that they put it back where they found it shows good conservation practices. Most people would call all small fish "minnows", but in *Fish* the differences are carefully explained in the story about the carp. The same attention to detail appears in all the life histories: the Yellow Perch, whose spawning techniques can result in the eggs being washed up on nearby barbed wire fences; the Burbot, one of the few fish that lay eggs in February; the gory, parasitic Lamprey; the incredible inexplicable journey of the Chinook Salmon and the American Eel. The story of the Cannel Catfish was fun to read, especially when the snapping turtle nips the farmer as he tries to tickle the fish in the submerged barrel. As a minor note, a glossary of basic terms would be of some benefit to the reader, e.g., milt, plankton, barbels.

*Vanishing animals of the world* presents fascinating scientific information and explains the use of zoos in conservation. The Arabian Oryx, for example,

became completely extinct in the wild; zoos have been able to breed them and then reintroduce them into the wild. Pere David's Deer make an interesting history lesson; the species disappeared in China after the Boxer Rebellion; ironically an Englishman, the Duke of Bedford, managed to raise a new herd. *Extinct Animals of the World* begins with the ill-fated Dodo, extinct in just 174 years, because passing sailors stopping on the island of Mauritius to restock their supplies of fresh meat had some "sport" with the docile dodo. However the record for the fastest extermination of any species belongs to the Stellar's Sea Cow which became extinct in just 27 years. The Quagga, the Crescent Nialtail Wallaby, the suicidal Carolina Parakeet, the Tarpan, and the Elephant Bird, extinct from the island of Madagascar not far from the dodo's home of Mauritius, all are presented in stories easily understood. *Time and Life: fossils tell the earth's story* is set out differently from the others in the series. Information on the kind of life in each period would be very useful in a school project.

This worthwhile and enjoyable series will help to foster interest in living things, endangered animals, extinct animals and prehistoric times. Each album becomes an ongoing workbook and reference book in one!

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## CE PROFESSEUR QUI AIMAIT LES FLEURS...

**Marie-Victorin, poète et éducateur.** André Lefebvre. Montréal, Guérin, 1987. 203 pp., 9,00\$ broché. ISBN 2-7601-1838-X.

*La flore laurentienne, vous connaissez? Moi, pas. Je n'ai pas lu, pas même consulté cet ouvrage. Je sais cependant qu'il s'agit d'un monument de notre savoir national dans le domaine de la botanique. Je ne suis pas sûr que la plupart des étudiants qui achèvent leur secondaire en savent autant. Toutefois, il se pourrait bien que sans le savoir, ils héritent à travers leurs cours d'écologie ou de sciences de la nature des idées et des méthodes du frère Marie-Victorin.*

Quoi qu'il en soit, le but premier d'André Lefebvre qui a produit ce *Marie-Victorin, le poète éducateur*, n'était pas de révéler un ancêtre aux amateurs d'herbiers ou aux excursionnistes de nos contemporains "sentiers d'interprétation de la nature". L'auteur qui professe doctement à la Faculté des sciences de l'éducation de l'Université de Montréal répondait plutôt à une commande qui lui avait été adressée dans le cadre du vingtième anniversaire de sa faculté. Ce qui explique l'accent mis sur certains aspects de la per-