

ter on the mainland because they have to compete for food with the wolves who belong there, and there is not enough to sustain them all. The balance is only restored when the wolves return to the island.

The book is beautifully illustrated with full-page coloured pictures. The text is short and descriptive and the reality of some animals devouring others is treated matter-of-factly as part of nature and not dramatized. Children aged eight and up will enjoy reading *Wolf Island* by themselves, but the book could be shared with a class or small group to generate valuable discussion about ecosystems.

While *Wolf Island* deals with animal life in the wild, *The flying ark* explains what happens when animals in captivity are transported by people from one place to another by air. Carolyn Jackson has researched the air travel arrangements for a wide variety of creatures ranging from bees to flamingoes and octopi to elephants. When we see these animals in zoos and pet stores, little thought is given to the question of how they were brought there. In an aircraft, each species is given individual care and treatment to protect and provide for its needs. The author describes the different kinds of containers used, what special foods the animals favour and how the animals are likely to behave when they are nervous or upset, all in a very amusing way. Included on each page of text are three or four interesting and often little-known facts about the animals: for example, male penguins hold the eggs on top of their feet to hatch them and gorillas dislike water, even to drink.

*The flying ark* is illustrated by Graham Bardell, whose brightly coloured, humorous and imaginative animals, suitably attired for their journeys, ideally complement the text.

The book will be enjoyed by children in junior grades particularly, but many intermediates will also find it very funny and informative.

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## DANCING POPCORN AND TRICKY FLIES EXPLAINED

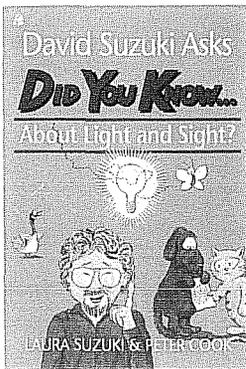
**David Suzuki asks did you know... About light and sight?** Laura Suzuki and Peter Cook. General Paperbacks, 1990. 64 pp., \$4.95 paper. ISBN 7736-7245-1; **Dr. Zed's sensational science activities.** Gordon Penrose. Illus. Tina Holdcroft. Greedy de Pencier, 1990. 48 pp., \$9.95 paper. ISBN 0-920775-53-5.

Dr. Zed has long been capitalizing on a zany, fun-filled approach to science, and his latest, *Dr. Zed's sensational science activities*, is no exception. Twenty-



one colourful and jam-packed activities entice readers to participate and learn more about the world around them. Young scientists discover that even making a few goodies, like pudding and valentine hearts is considered "science"! But the range of activities is not limited. Children can create a winter home for bugs, discover a mini-Magnetic Hill, or make a twirling mini-copter out of paper. Along with the many new activities, a new twist, dancing popcorn, has been added to an oldie, the vinegar and baking soda reaction.

Each experiment contains a list of things needed, an explanation of what is being investigated, and concise directions. This thoroughness, combined with Tina Holdcroft's cartoons of Dr. Zed and his assistant rats and full-colour photographs of real kids with the experiments, makes science fun. Where else can you get rats asking questions while Dr. Zed explains? Although finding information is not difficult, the book is enhanced with a table of contents, an index, and an experiment log.



*David Suzuki asks did you know... About light and sight?*, the first book in a new non-fiction series, is an upbeat little book with brief answers to 54 questions about light and sight that children often ask and adults find hard to explain. The format and illustrations are reminiscent of *Ripley's believe it or not*. Each page has that syndicated cartoon look with the title as part of the question. The illustrations take a humorous bent with cartoon people and sleepy-eyed frogs and bugs.

The questions are intriguing. I'm sure all of us have wondered at one time, "...why it's so hard to swat a fly? ...or...how fireflies light up?" The answers are easy to read and understand, "A fly's eye is made up of a hundred tiny eyes. Each of them sees things at a slightly different angle from the others...." Short and sweet, the information provides a basic understanding of the concept. The focus of the book is to answer questions, and it doesn't go beyond that. However, one activity, "Find out where your blind spot is" does lead to investigation. More of this would have made a less passive book.

Although it is a slim volume and the questions can be found by flipping through the pages, a table of contents and numbered pages would have been

handy for quick reference. Some children may find the block capital letters hard to read.

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## CHERISHED RECOLLECTIONS

### **Town house, country house: Recollections of a Quebec childhood**

Hazel Boswell. Ed., R.H. Hubbard. McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990. 136 pp., \$24.95 cloth. ISBN 0-7735-0721-3.

The title given to these "recollections of a Quebec childhood" is not very racy. It is, however, accurate: the book deals with town life and country life in nineteenth-century Quebec, from the viewpoint of the children of a comfortable bourgeois family. The title is accurate also because the book's content is not exceptionally racy either.

Hazel Boswell deserves much credit for the clarity of her style as she evokes, in rather episodic fashion, a year in the young lives of the children of Sir Henri Joly de Lotbinière, upper class resident of the city of Quebec and *seigneur* of the estate of Lotbinière on the south shore of the St. Lawrence. The subject matter of the narrative derives from things seen and done by these children, in town and in the country, and historically compressed for narrative purposes into the winter and summer of 1872-73. Although the material is more than a hundred years old, and although it was clearly passed on orally in the manner of family anecdotes – transmitted primarily, one supposes, by the author's mother, fourteen-years-old during the year of the narrative and the eldest of the seven children – the author manages to imbue all of the childish adventures and every-day experiences with a real immediacy and interest.

The personalities of the various members of the household, family and servants, are portrayed in a lively way, and the interplay between these personalities are occasionally at the root of some clearly cherished recollection. However, the author further uses the children as a means to paint a series of sketches of daily life in that period: sugaring off in the bush, a log drive, a trip on a paddle-wheel steamer, a sawmill.

Two relatively minor flaws mar this book. The first has to do with the episodic nature of the subject matter: the work lacks any unifying plot. This will not matter at all to the reader who is content to move from scene to scene, to meet the people the children meet and to share a heterogeneous series of their experiences. Again, the title of the book is at least not misleading.