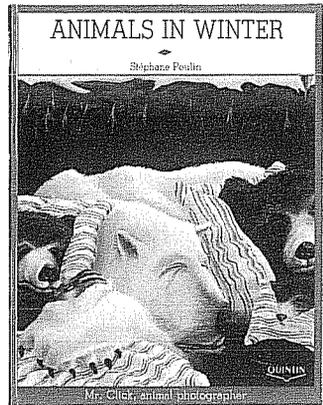


identifies each animal in the illustrations.

The boldly-coloured pictures, large print, limited text with meticulously selected detail, humour, and, of course, fact combine overall to make the "Mr. Click, Animal Photographer" series unique and appealing. The humour, in particular, gives these books a fresh and sophisticated edge, seldom seen in non-fiction books about animals for young children.

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INVENTIVE INSECT AS HERO

Wickiup Walkingstick. Anne Macdonald. Illus. Elaine Blier. Red Deer College Press, 1991. Unpag., \$11.95, cloth. ISBN 0-88995-063-6.

Wickiup is a small, green insect known as a walkingstick. He is accidentally sprayed with orange paint by a passing tree-cutter who is marking trees, thus losing his protective camouflage and exposing him to dangers such as hungry birds. Eventually, he uses cunning to regain his inconspicuous green colour in the same manner as he lost it. The theme is one of survival, based on Wickiup's ability to hide from his enemies through his green camouflage.

This book, with its quickly-paced narrative, is targeted for six- to ten-year-olds. The crisis is introduced early as Wickiup's back is sprayed, and the sense of his danger is well developed in Macdonald's descriptions of the pursuing bird's swooping attacks. Once Wickiup regains his original colour, the book ends rather abruptly with a parting comment on Wickiup's cleverness.

Wickiup is an interesting choice of hero: an insect protagonist is original and refreshing. Macdonald obviously feels no need to use "cute" animals to generate the reader's sympathies, especially within the context of environmental concerns or the theme of survival. This story also involves the relationship of Nature and humans. Again, Macdonald avoids stereotypes such as people against Nature. Humans here are not bumbling clods or maliciously destructive; they appreciate and work to maintain Nature. Unconsciously, however, they affect the life of one of Nature's smaller members.

Wickiup's habitat is represented not through words, but through illustrations. Elaine Blier employs a palette of pastel greens and soft browns. The colours rarely contrast in tone; Blier appears to be making a statement about the serenity

and unity of nature, but in keeping with the survival theme, this colour scheme falls short. Even Wickiup's dangerously conspicuous new coat of orange is a soft pastel tangerine at best, and at the height of his danger the tone of the drawings' colours is still rather too tranquil to lend appropriate credibility to the story. Also detrimental to the story's effect are the two-inch pastel green borders framing each illustration. They appear stylish, but minimize the pictures, and the reader is constantly aware of the structure of the book while experiencing the story.

This is an inventive story with potentially effective illustrations that could be extrapolated for a more dramatic effect. The story itself is interesting and concisely written, worthy of recommendation despite its shortcomings.

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SEASONS BY THE SEA

Waiting for the whales. Sheryl McFarlane. Illus. Ron Lightburn. Orca, 1991. Unpag., \$16.95 cloth. ISBN 0-920501-664; **Grey cat at sea.** Joan Skogan. Illus. Claudia Stewart. Polestar, 1991. Unpag., \$14.95 cloth. ISBN 0-919591-698.

Grey cat at sea and *Waiting for the whales* are stories which reveal the influence that living creatures can have on humans. The aloof yet playful grey cat provides amusement for the seamen on the Rekin while the whales delight and highlight the lives of the old man and his granddaughter each year. Both stories are set on the west coast of British Columbia, portraying the tranquility and enjoyment that the sea offers its habitants. Such similarities, however, are superficial. Although both have appreciation of beasts at their core, *Waiting for the whales* is the deeper, more insightful story both in text and illustrations.

Grey cat at sea is a simple, straightforward story of a feline seeking a home. The text follows the style of a sailor's log told in third-person narrative which offers children insight into the daily life on a fishing trawler. These detailed accounts reflect the author's wealth of experience at sea. However, while the story is informative and entertaining, the characters lack depth and development. As a result, the young reader may laugh at the antics of the protagonist but not identify with or feel compassion for her. In fact, what we do learn about the cat is appalling: she is self-centred, egotistical, and ungrateful. The phrase "the cat did not care" becomes tedious. Furthermore, while the colours are bright and attractive, the illustrations are, like the text, flat. They are ancillary to the story, providing only physical details of the vessel.

Grey cat at sea is, then, a playful story but too long and detailed for the beginning reader. It is more likely to be enjoyed by an older child willing to be challenged by the interesting fishing vocabulary.