

The Lake Sturgeon, a History of Its Fishery and Problems of Conservation

By W. J. K. HARKNESS and J. R. DYMOND.
Ontario Department Lands and Forests.
1961. 121 p.

Although there are hundreds of papers on some species of Canadian fishes, rarely is this dispersed literature brought together in one account. It is even more rare that such an account should be both enjoyable to read and yet knowledgeable. The material ranges from graphs of catch and growth to tall tales and legends about sturgeons. There are sections on size (up to 310 pounds), distribution, habits, food, growth, reproduction, artificial propagation, caviar, isinglass, competitors, predators, fishing methods, Indians and sturgeon, the fishery, and conservation. Illustrating the booklet are a map, numerous photographs and graphs.

The decline of the lake sturgeon fishery is well documented. For example the annual catch in Ontario around the turn of the century was over 1,200,000 pounds, but in the 1950s was under 200,000 pounds. While intensive fishing contributed its share to the decrease of the species, also important were the construction of dams and pollution. The low effective reproductive rate of the species prevents rapid recovery. Does the decline of the lake sturgeon presage the decline of further species?

To sportsman, fisheries biologists, administrators and to ichthyologists the writing of similar monographs on other species would be useful and entertaining.

D. E. McALLISTER

National Museum of Canada
Ottawa

Our Synthetic Environment

By LEWIS HERBER. A. A. Knopf, New York.
1962. viii + 285 p. \$6.50.

Considering the ever-increasing problems caused by the pollution of the land, water and air, it is somewhat surprising

that we had to wait until the year 1962 for the appearance of a book covering the various ramifications of these problems. Fortunately, *Our Synthetic Environment* by Lewis Herber covers this niche very well.

In his foreword the author states that the main qualification he can claim on the subject is a long and patient study of other men's works and that the book is concerned with the problems of our natural environment as they involve the needs of man. The author has done an admirable job in reviewing a vast amount of technical information and by writing a book in clear, non-technical language which can be read by the average interested reader.

Along with the wonderful scientific advances achieved by our civilization have come dangers, many of them only vaguely known to most of us. It is these dangers which are referred to more specifically.

The first chapter deals with an analysis of the problem. The second chapter discusses agriculture and health. He stresses the value of good soil management, and points out that the thoughtless use of chemical agents in the production of food may well make it possible to grow crops in great abundance, but of low quality on soil that is basically in poor condition. Crop production has resulted in large expanses of single crop species and simplification of the landscape, which in turn creates highly favorable conditions for an infestation. If chemical controls become increasingly lethal, the earth may prove to be incapable of supporting a viable, healthy human species.

In the chapter on urban life and health, the author refers to the urban man as a "nervous, excitable, and highly strained individual who is burdened by continual personal anxieties and mounting social insecurity".

In his chapter on the problem of chemicals in food, the author points out several implications the average consumer ought to know more about.

The chapter on environment and cancer is very thought-provoking. The connection between the rising incidence of lung cancer and changes in man's environment has affected traditional thinking about the causes of cancer profoundly.

Radiation and human health, dealt with in the next chapter, is something we all should know more about. The various dangers involved are discussed under the headings: The effects of radiation, the problems of X radiation, fallout and the nuclear age.

When dealing with human ecology in the next chapter the author arrives at the conclusion that "by oversimplifying the natural environment, we have created an incomplete man who lives an unbalanced life in a standardized world. Such a man is ill—not only morally and psychologically, but physically".

The final chapter discusses health and society.

The author states that his book is guided by a rational humanism, not a sentimental humanism. On the whole the reviewer would agree that he has used a rational approach, but here and there a certain amount of bias in selecting data to substantiate his arguments seems apparent. The book is well written and organized. References are compiled in a "notes" section, an effective and useful method of presenting supporting evidence. The book is well edited and it contains very few typographical errors. The reviewer can recommend it highly to any reader who wants to know more about his place in our artificial environment with its many problems.

ANTOON DE VOS

Department of Zoology,
Ontario Agricultural College,
Guelph, Ontario

A Book of Canadian Animals

By CHARLES PAUL MAY. Illustrations by John Crosby. The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, Toronto, 1962. 115 p. \$2.75.

It is well known to publishers in Canada that there is a real need for Canada-oriented nature books for children. The books that fulfill this need will serve as important educational tools and will, it is hoped, be financially successful as well. After carefully reading this book, I feel that it was written in an attempt to exploit this deficiency for financial gain, but that the author has little to say of educational value.

A Book of Canadian Animals, about some Canadian mammals, not animals in general, was written by a non-Canadian who has "visited Canada at various times". Mr. May writes in a condescending style that can be best illustrated by a few passages.

"If you see a doormat crawling along the ground, it is probably a badger . . . Its silvery grey hairs drag along the ground at its sides so you may not be able to see its legs . . . The badger likes country that is open . . . If you are in forest, don't look for the badger."

"The little brown bat gets its name from its pretty brown fur, which is soft and silky. There is also a big brown bat, but it is actually rather small. Because it is bigger than the little brown bat, it is known as the big brown bat." (!)

Another gem, "The first time you see a lemming you may think it is a mouse. Don't let this *worry* you, (*italics mine*) as most people think the same thing." Mammalogists and Webster's New International Dictionary define a mouse as "any of numerous species of small rodents . . .".

Twenty-eight species of mammals are treated (out of approximately 191 species in Canada) in the same stilted manner, with paragraphs on general appearance (sketchy), distribution (not always correct) and life history (brief). Each



De Vos, Antoon. 1962. "Our Synthetic Environment, by Lewis Herber [Review]." *The Canadian field-naturalist* 76(3), 171–172.
<https://doi.org/10.5962/p.342036>.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/89328>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.342036>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/342036>

Holding Institution

Harvard University, Museum of Comparative Zoology, Ernst Mayr Library

Sponsored by

Harvard University, Museum of Comparative Zoology, Ernst Mayr Library

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: In copyright. Digitized with the permission of the rights holder.

Rights Holder: Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>

Rights: <https://biodiversitylibrary.org/permissions>

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.