

Book Reviews

ZOOLOGY

The Ecology of Stray Dogs. A Study of Free-ranging Urban Animals

By Alan Beck. 1973. York Press, Baltimore. 98 pp. \$9.50.

A few years ago it would have been difficult to imagine that any biologist would spend years observing what stray dogs are up to in a city. With the current interest in urban animals, however, the subject of city dogs seems both pertinent and intriguing. Thus Alan Beck who studied dogs in Baltimore, a city of 72 squares miles, nearly one million people, and about 43 000 free-ranging dogs, has written a book of general interest.

Beck includes a great deal of information in his book. He found that the number of dogs in Baltimore increased with the density of people. As the human population went up, so did the available garbage, the number of open yards and shelter areas, and the amount of crime, which tended to encourage dog ownership. The mortality of the dogs was also high in slum areas. In one year 8400 dogs were collected that had died of disease or were killed by cars. During this same year the Animal Shelter took in over 18 500 dogs of which 83% were gassed or sent to medical institutions. The total known mortality for the year was one-quarter of the entire dog population of the city, a conservative estimate since many carcasses would not have been collected. Dogs found dead on the street had an average age, judged by their teeth, of 2.3 years and thus were probably much younger than the average household pet. The dead dogs were taken to a rendering

plant where they were made into soap and a chicken and hog food-supplement, one of the few examples of recycling of natural components in the urban ecosystem.

The feces and urine of urban dogs are a problem. Beck calculated that over 18 700 gallons of urine were excreted by dogs each day in Baltimore. This urine may kill the bark on trees and pollute storm water. Feces may not only pollute open supplies of water but spread a variety of diseases and parasites to other dogs and to man. Feces also attract hungry brown rats, which may then use dog houses for shelter. Dogs chase the cats that stalk the rats, but ignore the rats themselves.

In Baltimore about 7000 cases of dog bite (mostly by stray dogs) are reported each year. These have not been serious, although children have been killed by dogs in nearby areas. German shepherds attacked people more often than did other breeds, and females bit more people than did males.

The Ecology of Stray Dogs is not a long book, but it contains much of interest to urban dwellers, whether they like or dislike dogs in their city.

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Otter Press
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Birds of the Oshawa – Lake Scugog Region, Ontario

By Ronald Tozer and James Richard. Private Printing, Box 28, Whitney, Ontario. 384 pp. \$7.50.

This is a book to be used. Depending on your need it can be used for reference, for comparison, or to make the novice into an expert. It is not so much a shiny multicolored bird-book that would make a fancy gift, as a book to buy for yourself.

The book's first section is a very understandable account of the region's geology, followed by an interesting outline of the variety of habitats found in the area. The main section deals with the birds in field-guide order. The authors show the abundance and occurrence of each species by

selected sightings. Nesting information, including a description of the eggs and nest, are given where applicable. The accounts of rare birds usually include data from outside the Oshawa region so that the local sightings will be more relevant. The book has eight appendices including one on the Little Gull and one on the Oshawa Naturalists Club Bluebird project.

The main drawback of the book is locked into its very purpose. The value of the book decreases markedly with increasing distance from Oshawa. People in the area between say Kingston, Peterborough, and Hamilton will find it directly applicable and most useful. Those living from



Dagg, A I. 1975. "The ecology of stray dogs. A study of free ranging urban animals, by Alan Beck [Review]." *The Canadian field-naturalist* 89(2), 195–195.
<https://doi.org/10.5962/p.344864>.

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