

ENVIRONMENT

To the Wild Country

By John and Janet Foster. 1975. Van Nostrand Reinhold, Toronto. \$19.95.

A series of nature films that John and Janet Foster prepared for the CBC inspired the book, *To the Wild Country*. The Fosters guide us through six of their favorite locations in the Canadian wilderness: Kluane, the Pacific shore, short grass country, Algonquin Park, the St. Lawrence, and Baffin Island. Their book is a very personal armchair tour which captures the essence of each region.

The text of *To the Wild Country* is a first-person narrative which relates details of the filming for the television serial and recounts intimate details of a particular terrain. For example, the reader learns that on Baffin Island a lemming rummaged through the Fosters' packs one night and escaped with a feast of freeze-dried vegetables. One can read about the film crew's quest for remote Triangle Island near Pacific Rim National Park. They spent several days trying to get to the bird-infested "miserable pile of rocks," even attempting to hitch a ride on a destroyer that the Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia was using to visit remote ports.

Interspersed with the text are many well-documented black-and-white photos, visual essays which complement the narrative. Excellent colored photos

appear at the end of each chapter. My personal favorites are the fantastic bleak landscapes of Baffin Island. Unfortunately, the descriptions for the colored pictures are grouped together at the end of the book, a feature which necessitates excessive page-flipping. The legends, however, are certainly worth reading, particularly by nature-photography buffs, because they include such information as the type of lens used for a particular shot.

Perhaps the mood of this book can best be expressed by J. B. Harkin's words, the closing quotation of *To the Wild Country*: "To go into the quiet woods or mountains produces a feeling of perfect rest and liberation—a true re-creation. . . . A person finds pleasure in the absolute stillness, in primitive and wild sounds such as the wind in the trees, the falling of water, the wide expanse of landscape or sky, and he renews again his ancient relationship with wild animals, a relationship as old as man himself."

John and Janet Foster have told us of their re-creation. Their book compels each reader to go and seek his/her own perfect rest and liberation.

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Fire and Ecosystems

By T. T. Kozlowski and C. E. Ahlgren (Editors). 1974. Academic Press, New York, 542 pp. \$39.50.

The use of fire as a resource management tool has been abused by managers having incomplete knowledge of its results and by a public unjustifiably fearful of its effects. "Because of growing interest, pressures exerted by public and conservation groups, and conflicting schools of thought among biologists regarding the role of fire, the editors decided that the time was appropriate to bring together in one volume a summary of available information on the role of fire in the ecosystems of the modern world." In the fourteen chapters of *Fire and Ecosystems*, international fire ecologists have reviewed the effects of fire on whole ecosystems as well as ecosystems components.

In itself each paper is excellent. And there is remarkably little repetition for a text which has restricted itself to a narrow topic, has attempted to

review distinct aspects of a subject, and has had numerous contributors.

The editors feel that ". . . the new philosophy of almost complete condemnation of all fire reflected rather wholesale rejection of the historically demonstrated beneficial effects of fire." But this discrepancy between modern theory and empirical fact does not appear to be a problem in Australia. "In Australia, a good public understanding has been one of the contributing factors to widespread success of the hazard reduction control burning program, which utilizes low intensity fires to remove fuel accumulation and facilitate wildfire control." The omission of Australian material in *Fire and Ecosystems* is one of the book's few weaknesses.

Papers by J. F. Bendell and R. J. Vogl are representative of the thoughtful scientific quality found in the other contributions to *Fire and Ecosystems*. Bendell's paper (Chapter 4) on the effects of



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