Book Reviews

Natural Grace: The Charm, Wonder, and Lessons of Pacific Northwest Animals and Plants. By William Dietrich. 2003. University of Washington Press. Seattle, Washington. 236 p. US\$16.95 paper. ISBN 0-295-98293-4.

How would you like to be referred to as an animal? Whether or not you like it, that is the first thing that William Dietrich does in his latest book, *Natural Grace: The Charm, Wonder, and Lessons of Pacific Northwest Animals and Plants*. In fact, he doesn't just imply it, he comes straight out and says: "You animal you." From there, he allows you to wander through essays about the little things that make the Pacific Northwest what it is.

Natural Grace is the third and most recent of author William Dietrich's non-fiction books about the Pacific Northwest. It is a collection of short essays adapted from his articles in the Seattle Times' *Pacific Northwest* magazine. Ranging from geology and jellyfish to geoducks (gooey-ducks) and cedar trees, *Natural Grace* offers information on a wide range of topics. These topics are arranged in sections that group essays with similar features. For example, the section entitled *Secret and Small* includes essays on stream life, dirt, and spiders, among others. Most of the essays are under a dozen pages in length and include sketches by illustrator Brenda Cunningham. The book also includes an index, as well as a suggested reading list. I found both of these features to be handy, especially since the essays encourage the reader to dig more deeply and further study the Pacific Northwest.

Greater understanding of the natural world is the common thread that ties together Dietrich's essays. His belief is that understanding nature will help us better understand ourselves. Each of the 21 essays in the book offers an array of facts and comparisons about nature and humans. Many of these facts came from books in the suggested reading list, as well as from personal interviews with experts from state, federal, and private organizations. While offering an eye-opening education about the Northwest, Dietrich writes in such a fashion that I often found myself grinning, even laughing. For example, while discussing the success of mosquitoes, he writes:

"Researchers in Canada once allowed themselves to be exposed to a swarm and were bitten nine thousand times in one minute, an experience which calls into question the entire scientific method." In this one sentence I learned just how good mosquitoes are at what they do, and also was reminded about how dedicated researchers are, although I suspect that they were graduate students or interns.

I was not surprised to learn that Dietrich had won a Pulitzer Prize for his coverage of the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill. His writing style is easy to follow and engages the reader's attention. Plus, he uses a strong dose of charm and wit to liven up 236 pages of facts and scientific knowledge. *Natural Grace* is a book that can be easily read from beginning to end, or essay by essay, in whatever order the reader decides upon. Dietrich proves himself to be appealing yet technically competent in his knowledge of the Pacific Northwest. In fact he has every right to begin by calling his readers animals. He eventually apologizes for the reference, but then compare readers to an organism that is much more unflattering. If you wish to learn which life form that is, I suggest you discover your own copy of *Natural Grace*. — *Cassandra Wannamaker*, Washington State University, Pullman, Washington.

Rangelands of the Arid and Semi-arid Zones of Uzbekistan.

By G. Gintzburger, K. N. Toderich, B. K. Mardonov, and M. M. Mahmudov. 2003. Centre de Cooperation Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Developpement (CIRAD) and the International Center for Agricultural Research in the dry areas (ICARDA). 426 p. 76.00Euros, flexible binding. ISBN CIRAD 2-87614-555-3, ICARDA 92-9127-137-8.

Rapidly escalating international interest in the rangelands of Central Asia is manifested in the new book, *Rangelands of the Arid and Semi-arid Zones of Uzbekistan*, a joint publication of CIRAD and ICARDA, by G. Gintzburger, K. N. Toderich, B. K. Mardonov, and M. M. Mahmudov. It is a broad, introductory survey of the rangeland ecosystems, and range-livestock systems, and pastoral culture of the region. The book draws on the collective work of many international researchers that have been active in the area over recent decades, including the work of Russian-speaking scientists, much of which has been inaccessible to Western scientists.

The content of *Rangelands of the Arid and Semi-arid Zones of Uzbekistan* essentially consists of 7 parts. Following a brief introduction, Part 1 examines aspects of the environment of the region, including geological, climatological, edaphic, phytogeographic, and agricultural fundamentals of the zones. The book contains notably detailed descriptions of the region's bioclimatology, including some informative, statistical figures showing climatic relationships. Although the book has significant emphasis on grazing throughout, it contains surprisingly few data or estimates of forage production, especially considering the depth of the bioclimatological content. This first section does contain some descriptions and data of trends in livestock numbers and agricultural land use.

The second principal section of the book is a description of the flora and of the main vegetation types of the region. This section includes a number of detailed tables of data on the soils, flora, and especially, the climate of the area. Forage production data, and forage supply/demand information are again limited. Some of the tables in this section are sufficiently detailed that they might have been moved to an appendix, but they are uniformly well designed.

Section 3, involving the descriptions of individual plants, is the largest section of the book. The plant species are arranged alphabetically by family name. Many of the plant names are familiar here, which will remind North America range management scientists of the rich history of plant introductions from Central Asia. The plant descriptions are informative, and include individual subsections describing characteristics of morphology, reproduction, pastoral importance, fodder value, economic interest, habitat, and distribution. Each species description contains from 1 to 4 color photographs of the plant or its parts. Monthly production tables are provided for a few species for which such data are available.

Section 4, on the ecology, biology and economic importance of arid and semi-arid range plants briefly surveys a range of subjects, including floral life forms, chemical composition of plants, toxic and medicinal plants, plants that cause mechanical injury, seed characteristics and germination ecology.

The book's fifth main section, on rangeland improvement and rehabilitation in Uzbekistan, includes 17 pages of text and tables