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LIVING

A naturalist's library

With the holidays fast approaching, I'd like to offer some recommendations for natural history book giving. Although reading is no substitute for actually getting out and enjoying the natural world



OUR CHANGING SEASONS
Drew Monkman

first hand, a well-stocked library is still a must. Fortunately, the number of excellent nature books seems to increase exponentially every year. Just the number of bird guides that are now available is overwhelming in itself.

The following titles represent some of my personal favourites.

Many relate specifically to central Ontario and the Kawarthas. Some are fairly new, while others are classics that never lose their appeal.

Although many of these books are sold at local bookstores, you may have to purchase others directly from the publisher. A few of the older titles may be available through online used book dealers.

■ **The Sibley Field Guide to the Birds of Eastern North America**
By David Sibley (Knopf, 2003) \$29.95

What I like most about this compact field guide are the wonderfully detailed illustrations. The author provides up to eight different drawings of each bird, showing differences such as sex, age, time of year, and whether the bird is flying or perched. There is also an informative text covering each bird's status, habitat, range, voice and identifying marks.

■ **Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario, 2001-2005**
Project coordinator: Mike Cadman (Bird Studies Canada, 2007) \$96

This is a beautifully designed, 700-page book with full-colour, state-of-the-art maps and photographs accompanying each of the more than 300 species accounts. The detailed maps show the current distribution of each breeding bird species in the province, and how its distribution has changed over the past 20 years. It can be ordered online at www.ontarionature.org/shop or by calling toll-free 1-866-900-7100. Unfortunately, the atlas will not be available until February.

■ **Forest Plants of Central Ontario**

By Brenda Chambers (Lone Pine Publishing, 1996) \$24.95

This sturdy field guide covers nearly all of the trees, shrubs, wildflowers, grasses, sedges, rushes, ferns, mosses, club-mosses, liverworts and lichens that occur in the forests of central Ontario — and all in one volume. Because the book focuses specifically on this area, you don't have to plow through a lot of plants that are only found elsewhere.

■ **Trees in Canada**

By John Laird Farrar (Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1997) \$45

This comprehensive book on the trees of Canada makes identification easy. It includes range maps, great colour photographs, and beautiful line drawings of leaves



Drew Monkman, special to The Examiner

and reproductive structures. It also provides information on habitat, how to recognize the tree at a glance, and keys for both summer and winter identification

■ **Newcomb's Wildflower Guide**
By Lawrence Newcomb (Little, Brown and Company, 1989) \$25.99

The author's simple identification system is based on answering five questions about a plant's features that are easily visible, even to the untrained eye. It allows even complete beginners to quickly and accurately identify any wildflowers you are likely to find in eastern Canada. The book offers a mix of colour illustrations and pen and ink drawings.

■ **Mushrooms of Ontario and Eastern Canada**

By George Barron (Lone Pine Publishing, 1999) \$26.95

From slime moulds to puffballs, this is a comprehensive guide to the often confusing world of fungi. A quick glance at the back cover immediately directs you to the right mushroom group and section of the book, which includes 609 species, illustrated with full colour photographs.

■ **A Field Guide to Eastern Butterflies**

By Paul A. Opler (Houghton Mifflin, 1998) \$26.95

A great little book for identifying the 90 or so species of butterflies we have in this area.

■ **A Field Guide to the Moths of Eastern North America**

By Charles V. Covell Jr (Houghton Mifflin, 1984) \$29.95

This is one of the few field guides to Ontario's moths that exists.

■ **Stokes Beginner's Guide to Dragonflies and Damselflies**

By Blair Nikula and Jackie Sones (Little, Brown and Co., 2002) \$12.95

Dragonfly and damselfly watching have, in recent years, become popular pursuits, especially with photographers. Although this great little book provides mostly an introduction to the hobby, it still includes most of the common species you're likely to see in our area.

■ **And Now the Weather**
By Keith Heidorn (Fifth House Ltd, 2005) \$22.95

This book is a compendium of explanations of everyday weather phenomena across Canada. Starting with the winter solstice and moving through the calendar year, the cycle of the seasons serves as the book's organizational framework.

■ **Nightwatch — A Practical Guide to Viewing the Universe**
By Terence Dickinson (Firefly Books, 1998) \$29.95

This is probably the best handbook for the beginning astronomer. Dickinson covers all the problems beginners face, such as how to choose telescopes and even pronounce the names of stars and constellations. The third edition is revised and expanded for use through 2010.

■ **Peterborough and the Kawarthas**

Editors: Peter Adams and Colin Taylor (Department of Geography, Trent University, 1992)

This informative book provides an overview of the physical and cultural environment of our region. The chapters cover topics such as climate, geology, landforms, flora and fauna, hydrology, watersheds, the cultural landscape, and field

trips. If you are unable to find a copy still in print, the entire book can be viewed on line at: www.trentu.ca/academic/geography/Publications.html

■ **Nature's Year in the Kawarthas**

By Drew Monkman (Natural Heritage Books, 2002) \$32.95

My book is an almanac of key events occurring in the natural world over the course of a year in the Kawartha Lakes district, and in cottage country in general. Covering all areas of our flora and fauna as well as weather and the night sky, the book is a month-by-month chronicle of the mileposts of the passing seasons.

■ **Algonquin Provincial Park Nature Books**

Various authors (Friends of Algonquin Park) \$2.95 each

This series of 10 booklets provides an overview of Algonquin Park's birds, mammals, fish, reptiles and amphibians, insects, butterflies, trees, wildflowers, and mushrooms. Almost all of the species discussed can also be found in the Kawarthas. However, the real strength of these short, richly-illustrated texts lies in their overview of the biology and ecology of each species. Available through the Friends of Algonquin Park at www.algonquinpark.on.ca/friends.html

■ **The Best of the Raven**

By Dan Strickland & Russ Rutter (Friends of Algonquin Park, 1996) \$7.95

This is a collection of short essays from the park's famous educational newsletter, The Raven. They cover a wide variety of natural history topics and are written in some of the finest prose you'll find any-

where.

■ **Up North and Up North Again**

By Doug Bennett and Tim Tiner (McClelland & Stewart, 1993 and 1997) \$24.99

These two extremely entertaining books are crammed full of information on the flora, fauna, night sky, and natural forces of nature that are found right on our doorstep in the cottage country of central and northern Ontario.

■ **Wild City: A guide to nature in urban Ontario**

By Doug Bennett and Tim Tiner (McClelland & Stewart, 2004) \$24.99

An urban version of the Up North series, Wild City is full of fascinating natural histories of 130 species of plants and wild animals found in Ontario's cities, everything from dog-strangling vine to carp.

■ **Nature in Winter**

By Donald Stokes (Little, Brown and Company, 1976) \$21.95

This pocket-sized book provides a superb introduction to the natural world in winter. It covers most everything you might see on a walk: winter weeds, snow crystals, wintering trees, evidence of insects, birds and abandoned nests, winter mushrooms, tracks in the snow, and evergreen plants. The relative simplicity of winter makes it an ideal season to begin exploring the natural world.

■ **Those of the Forest**

By Wallace Byron Grange (Willow Creek Press, 1953)

This classic nature book is the story of the forest told from within. The voices are those of the inhabitants themselves. We are exposed to the intricacies of nature and how everything is interdependent. The book is at once informative and strongly spiritual in its message.

■ **A Year in the Maine Woods**

By Bernd Heinrich (Addison Wesley, 1994) \$18

This quirky book is one of my very favourites. The author, a university professor, takes a leave of absence from his hectic life in order to slow down and spend a full year really paying attention to the lives of the plants and animals that surround his cabin in the woods of northern Maine. You'll want to do the same.

■ **A Sand County Almanac**

By Aldo Leopold (Ballantine, 1986) \$10.99

First published in 1949 by American ecologist and environmentalist Aldo Leopold, A Sand County Almanac is considered to be the book that launched the conservation movement. The author's love of land, nature, and seasonal change in his Wisconsin home is fully expressed. The book begins with an actual almanac covering each month of the year and providing anecdotes and observations on how the flora and fauna react to the changing seasons. It concludes with essays on conservation including Leopold's most famous essay, The Land Ethic. A must have.

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