

Resource Reviews

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WALK THROUGH THE WILDERNESS by Don Richards and Clive Walker.
Published by Endangered Wildlife Trust and Wilderness Trust of Southern Africa, Johannesburg. Second (revised) edition 1986. 146 pp., photographs, maps, charts and line drawings. Price R9,95.

Walk through the Wilderness is a study of the inter-relationships of all living things which exist in all natural communities, including man. The contents include geology, the life of a log, nature's laws, the water cycle, animal classification, animal adaptation and behaviour, treatment of snake-bites, edible plants of the bushveld, animal spoor, wildlife in danger and the survival techniques of the bushmen. It thus provides the reader with a general background to the natural environment. This gives the teacher a general structure in which to place environmental education. Because of the very general nature of the book the teacher would need to provide a lot more details of the wide range of topics covered. It thus could not be used as a textbook for classwork, but should be available in every school library.

I liked the language of the book as it is clear with no confusing terminology. As one reads the book one can feel the love that the authors have for nature. This is unusual in non-fiction material and so enhances its value for the young reader.

Petro Naudé

TROUT IN SOUTH AFRICA edited by P.H. Skelton & M.T.T. Davies. *Ichthos Newsletter Special Edition* No. 1. Published by Friends of the J.L.B. Smith Institute of Ichthyology, Grahamstown 1987. 20 pp. Price R3,00.

This booklet, the edited and summarised proceedings of a colloquium on trout fishing held in the J.L.B. Smith Institute of Ichthyology, is virtually an introductory guide to the subject and the current controversy surrounding it, especially in the Cape Province.

Articles range from the biology, ecology and economics of trout to the 'philosophy' of trout fishing and the management of alien fish vis-à-vis indigenous species. Contributors include fish scientists, fishermen and conservationists.

Packed with interesting, useful and relevant information, the document will be of value in the resource centre of anyone concerned with environmental education and most particularly our rivers and national freshwater resources. The document also forms a useful critical resource pack for self study at the higher secondary/lower tertiary level.

A further regular source of information on matters relating to fish and their environment (marine and freshwater) are the *Ichthos Newsletters* (three issues per year) also available from the Friends of the J.L.B. Smith Institute of Ichthyology. Members are also entitled to significant discounts on books and other 'fishy' items. For further information write to Private Bag 1015, Grahamstown 6140, South Africa.

Pat Irwin



TEACHING CHILDREN THROUGH THE ENVIRONMENT by Pamela Mays.
Published by Hodder & Stoughton, London 1985.

This is probably the most useful book on this topic to have appeared in the last five years. It embodies in a most readable format an approach to teaching which uses the environment as a starting point.

Philosophically Mays takes the view that most learning which is useful, including environmental learning, must of necessity take place in and through the school. Many aspects of the environment which children need to know about, would never be discovered by them on their own; they have to be taught. School learning should be structured and an environment conducive to learning created.

The opening chapter centres on the question 'What is the environment?' and through a description of a study undertaken among young children seeks to answer it. The author provides cogent arguments that the environment "includes not only physical phenomena but people, culture, and ideas as well."

Chapter 2, 'Perception and the environment', provides a useful background to subsequent issues examined. Mays emphasises that perceptions of the world vary and that teaching of any sort is not going to be meaningful if teachers and those taught by them have vastly dissimilar perceptions of reality.

Chapters 3 to 8 deal with the teaching of language, mathematics, history, science, geography and creativity *through the environment*. Each chapter is full of useful, practical exercises and ideas and the average classroom teacher will find possible explanations for the phenomena of child development observed and experienced daily.

This book is not primarily a guide to environmental education as such however; it does not explain in detail how to teach children to care for their environment. It is rather concerned with effective teaching by optimally using environmental resources and, by emphasising 'wise use' of these resources, ensuring their continued care. Reading it is guaranteed to enhance one's view of the environment and how it can be utilised to full educational advantage.

If one had to level a criticism it would be the inadequate treatment given to the human impact upon the environment and the insufficient emphasis on the aesthetic component of our lives in environmental terms. These facets might have been more integral to the issues dealt with in the book.

In conclusion this is nevertheless a most useful and appropriate book for anyone involved in any way with young children: it should be read by every practising teacher and school inspector.

Anne Curran

THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT by I. Douglas.
Published by Edward Arnold, London 1983. 229 pp.
tables, maps, diagrams, photographs, references,
index.

The Urban Environment represents a most valuable contribution to the field of urban ecology - an area of interest and concern which is receiving increasing attention as being of great importance to the majority of the earth's citizens, particularly as a larger proportion of the population congregate in urban areas. The book provides an holistic, synthesising approach to city areas, with a strong bias towards the physical environment. The social environment is not neglected. Rather it is integrated into the total framework and shown to be dependent on and interactive with the biophysical aspects of urban areas.

The book has three aims:

- to show that principles of physical geography may be applied to urban areas;
- to demonstrate that cities have environmental problems which can be understood by the application of climatic, geomorphological and biogeographical principles; and
- to illustrate that urban planning requires significant contributions from physical geography.

These objectives are achieved most admirably in a book which is divided into twelve chapters, arranged in three broad sections:

1. The functioning of city economies and of their physical environment.
2. The geomorphology and biogeography of urban areas; and
3. The problems associated with city areas, and their future in terms of planning and government strategies.

The Urban Environment is presented in a most usable format, with the inclusion of a wealth of information clearly presented in tabular and diagrammatic forms, backed up by an easily readable, integrative text. The summary tables and diagrams are particularly useful for the non-specialist who requires a rapid appreciation of factors involved in urban environmental studies. This is increasingly important as population pressures are being exerted on urban areas as exposure to wilderness and other rural areas diminish. Logically there must arise an emphasis in teaching and planning on the inhabited environment - the area of majority exposure and experience.

Illustrative examples are drawn from First World (London and New York) and Third World (Bolivia and Malaysia) environments. A variety of geographical regions, such as the high latitudes and the tropical areas, are also cited in the text as illustrations of particular points. Its application in the South African context is enhanced by the diversity of situations and areas cited as examples - many of them directly transferable to local experience.

Ian Douglas' book is the most useful I have encountered to date on the topic of urban ecology, comprising a remarkable collection of often ignored material between one set of covers. It is possible that it would have been enhanced by the inclusion of more illustrative photographs from more diverse sources, and a reduction in the number of maps. These minor criticisms aside, the book is highly recommended particularly where students of the social environment have limited appreciation of the physical environment on which society is so dependent. Students of and professionals in planning, geography, engineering, architecture and urban ecology would find this text most useful. Indeed, the concerned and involved layman would also find this a most interesting and valuable book.

Francis Gamble

NATIONAL PARKS: WILDLIFE GAME AND COLOURING BOOK
Enviro-Vision Series published by Shuter & Shooter,
1986. R2,65. Available in English and Afrikaans.

The title of this book implies that more than one National Park has been included. This does not seem to be the case, although the animals included are seen in many places throughout South Africa. The maps and much of the detailed information pertain only to the Kruger National Park.

In preparing this review the book was tried out on a number of children. The game for playing is suitable for very young children (under 6½ years) who are first learning the different types of animals, birds and reptiles. It is a pity to emphasise larger game and hardly mention the wonderful life of squirrels, fish eagles, spider webs in the dew, dung beetles and such like. For children over 6½ years the game gives the wrong motivation for conservation awareness in South Africa. To simply spot the most animals may well give a quick child the idea of superiority over a quieter child who would like to sit and watch the habits and markings of one particular species of animal such as a banded mongoose or ground squirrel. Parents who simply teach children to 'spot the animal' are no more helping environmental awareness than a picnic in a zoo. What is needed is some sort of awareness description of what the animal is doing or what it looks like, how it stalks, walks, flies etc. Children need to learn patience and observation of a few species per day rather than '3-second spots' of many animals and yet none in detail. The colouring-in section of the book suits this latter purpose admirably for the child of about 7 years and older, especially if he or she has access to a large variety of shades of crayons. The conservation diagram inside the front page has a couple of sketches of plants that are not indigenous to South Africa; perhaps purely Southern African examples should be used.

Viewed generally the book appears to be geared to popular use at a low level of conservation awareness. It leaves me with the impression that a visit to the Kruger National Park is for children's entertainment rather than to extend their depth of knowledge about life in all its aspects of a game reserve. The question to ask is: "Do we want a build up of quality of knowledge or a superficial quantity of animal names?"

Julie Wilcocks

THE MAKING OF THE MUSEUM PROFESSIONS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA by C.K. Brain & M.C. Erasmus.
Published by the Transvaal Museum in association with the Southern African Museums Association, Pretoria 1986. 46 pp. Price R5,00.

A copiously illustrated account of the history of the Southern African Museums Association and, inextricably tied to it, the professional development of our museums' staff and the changing concepts of museums over the past 50 years. A well written book which will be welcomed by museum enthusiasts for the background, insights and historical perspectives which it offers. It will also be interesting for anyone interested in the personalities - both scientific and administrative - who have shaped the museum services of Southern Africa which we enjoy today. In an indirect sense the book also contributes to the social and political history of Southern Africa by recording photographically and otherwise some of the changes which have and appear not yet to have taken place.

This book would be an asset to the library of any high school or institute of higher education.

Pat Irwin