

A PASSION FOR THE POLE: ETHOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN POLAR REGIONS. Edited by LOUWRENS HACQUEBORD and NIENKE BOSCHMAN. Groningen, The Netherlands: Barkhuis Publishing, 2008. ISBN-13: 9789077922408. x + 149 p., 14 contributors, maps, b&w illus., bib. Softbound. €20.

This book, the fourth volume in the “Circumpolar Studies” series, includes a preface, seven scientific papers, and an autobiography (followed by a bibliography) of Ko (Jacobus) de Korte, to whom this book is a tribute.

Ko is a well-known Dutch ecologist and polar explorer. Born in 1943, he grew up in a small farmer’s family before starting his biology studies at the University of Amsterdam in 1961. His Arctic passion started very early during his childhood, but his first experiences were in Svalbard, in the late 1960s, and included one overwintering experience on the uninhabited east coast at Kap Lee. In addition to doing his assigned work on polar bears during this stay, Ko collected an impressive quantity of ornithological data from this remote region of Svalbard, data that were later published in three parts in the journal *Beaufortia* (1972). One year later, he was again on his way to one of these remote Arctic places that attracted him. Indeed, from 1973 to 1975, he returned every summer from April to September to the Scoresby Sund area of East Greenland, where he continued to study birds, especially the long-tailed skua (or long-tailed jaeger), as a doctoral project. The long-tailed skua is a fascinating bird that shares its time between offshore tropical waters in winter and Arctic tundra, where it depends on the cycling lemming, in summer. Ko was the first to make an extensive study of this amazing species, and his main results, published in four parts (de Korte, 1977, 1986), are undoubtedly his scientific masterpiece. This pioneering work, still the most quoted reference for the species, is also a classic example through which to teach students the comprehensive organization required to produce a biological study with lasting value.

After several other trips around the world, including two expeditions to South Georgia and the South Shetlands (1987 and 1990), where he wanted to study other skua species, Ko returned to his beloved Arctic. And because he now wanted to share with others the unbelievable moods and landscapes he had found there, he got more involved in the tourism activities he had begun in the 1980s. Visiting the remotest and wildest places was surely also an important motivation for him. Though travelling the Arctic seas with tourists on cruise ships was certainly very different from walking the tundra in search of skua, Ko managed to continue to collect important biological information on some of the least-known populations of rare Arctic species, e.g., the bowhead whale in Franz Josef Land and the ivory gull in Severnaya Zemlya (de Korte and Belikov, 1994; Volkov and de Korte, 1996). Like his work on the long-tailed skua, one study of ivory gulls that he published with Volkov (Volkov and de Korte, 2000) is undoubtedly a reference work for this endangered species.

In many ways, Ko can probably be regarded as a unique ornithologist and scientist. The deep motivations that brought him to work in the Arctic are very personal and original. The fulfillment of his scientific aims required both adventurous and intellectual skills. Finally, his work successfully merged the descriptive methods traditionally used in biology with the modern, systemic ecological approach. This book is worth reading for the preface presenting the author’s life and the chapter he wrote himself alone—especially for polar researchers, who are often curious, as Ko is, about all polar “things” and not only those in their own field of science.

Individual readers will also find interest in some of the seven scientific papers, which cover very different fields: biological monitoring in NE Greenland, kleptoparasitism by frigate birds, color and size variation in the northern fulmar, barnacle goose breeding in West Spitzbergen, seabirds and whales, baleen whales in the Antarctic, and Arctic amoebae. The rationale for collecting these papers in a single volume was that all were inspired to some extent by Ko’s pioneering work. This approach is of course legitimate, but I found the subtitle of the book misleading; in my opinion, only one paper (on kleptoparasitism by frigate birds) truly deals with ethology. Some of the papers are mainly reviews, summaries, or updates of studies that were already published elsewhere, but others present very new and original results. One in particular (from L. Hacquebord) will surely interest most readers because it combines several fields of science (history, archaeology, mammalogy, and ornithology) in an attempt to explain the recent increase of some Arctic seabird species by the historical collapse of the bowhead whale stocks in the Atlantic Ocean. Hacquebord’s approach to this topic is interesting and comprehensive, like Jacobus (Ko) de Korte’s life.

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RACE TO THE POLAR SEA: THE HEROIC ADVENTURES OF ELISHA KENT KANE. By KEN McGOOGAN. Berkeley, California: Counterpoint Press, 2008. ISBN 978-1-58243-440-7. xii + 381 p., maps, b&w illus., selected bib., index. Hardbound. US\$26.00.

Born in Philadelphia on 3 February 1820, Elisha Kent Kane died in Havana, Cuba, on 16 February 1857, at the young age of 37. From about 1835 onwards, he suffered repeatedly from rheumatic fever and heart disease, but he refused to allow his health problems to constrain his activities. After initially studying geology at the University of Virginia, he switched in 1840 to medical studies at the University of Pennsylvania, graduating in 1843, and soon thereafter passed the exam necessary to become a naval surgeon.

Over the next seven years, Kane traveled to many parts of the world on board U.S. naval vessels—and was invariably partially incapacitated by seasickness. His adventures ranged from descending into the crater of a volcano on Luzon in the Philippines, during which he was almost overcome by the fumes, to contracting malaria while in Dahomey during a voyage to suppress the slave trade, to being wounded in the stomach by a lance-thrust in a skirmish between guerillas supporting the U.S. Army and Mexican troops in 1847.

But then, on 21 May 1850, he joined the USS *Advance* (Captain Edwin J. De Haven) at the Brooklyn Naval Yard, bound for the Arctic in search of the missing Franklin expedition. Funded by the New York shipping magnate, Henry Grinnell, *Advance* headed north, accompanied by the USS *Rescue* (Captain Samuel Griffin). After negotiating the ice of Baffin Bay, the two American ships made rendezvous with a small fleet of British vessels at Beechey Island: Captain Horatio Austin's squadron (HMS *Assistance*, *Resolute*, *Pioneer*, *Intrepid*, and *North Star*, Captain William Penny's two ships, *Lady Franklin* and *Sophia*, and Captain Sir John Ross's *Felix* and yacht *Mary*). While the British ships soon went into secure winter quarters, the two American vessels became beset in the ice of Wellington Channel on 13 September 1850. They first drifted north for almost the full length of that channel, then back south, east through Lancaster Sound and south through Baffin Bay and Davis Strait, and were finally released from the ice

on the west side of Davis Strait on 8 June 1851. *Advance* had been severely damaged by ice pressures, and many of her complement (including Captain de Haven) were suffering acutely from scurvy. The ships reached New York on 30 September 1851.

Kane began writing his account of the expedition (Kane, 1853) and gave numerous lectures on the subject. In November 1852, he first met Margaret (Maggie) Fox and her sister Kate, who were already famous as “spirit rappers,” spiritualists who claimed to be able to converse with the dead. Kane became infatuated with Maggie, and later even became secretly engaged to her.

But in the meantime, Kane had headed back to the Arctic, leading his own expedition. Working on the assumption that Smith Sound might lead to the “Open Polar Sea” where, Kane argued, Franklin's ships, *Erebus* and *Terror* might have become trapped, he proposed pushing north through that sound. He sailed from New York, again in *Advance*, on 31 May 1853, and ran north through Davis Strait, Baffin Bay, and Smith Sound into the basin later named after him. But by 10 September, ice conditions had forced him to go into winter quarters at Renssaeler Harbour (Renssaeler Bugt) on the southeastern shores of Kane Basin. In the fall, sledge parties from the ship explored the Greenland coast eastwards and northwards, discovering the impressive ice-front of the Humboldt Glacier (Gletsjer). In the spring of 1854, Kane and two of his officers explored the Greenland coast even farther north, to the entrance of Kennedy Channel, and in June and July, steward William Morton explored the Ellesmere Island coast to the vicinity of Franklin Island. In the early fall of 1854, with Kane's consent, the surgeon Isaac I. Hayes and eight companions set off south, hoping to reach Upernavik, but in December ice conditions forced them to return to the ship. In May 1855, Kane and his men abandoned *Advance*, and with the help of the Inughuit, with whom they had been in contact since the spring of 1854, set off south on foot and by boat. They reached Upernavik in early August and New York on 11 October 1855.

Kane immediately started writing his account of the expedition (Kane, 1856). Having completed the book and having secretly married Maggie Fox, despite his rapidly deteriorating health Kane traveled to London in 1856, in part to discuss with Lady Franklin the possibility of a further expedition in search of her husband and his missing expedition. Then, in the hope that the more salubrious Caribbean climate would be beneficial, he traveled to Havana. There he suffered two strokes and died.

McGoogan has written a readable (and at first sight, well-researched) biography of Kane. But a closer perusal will reveal that it leaves much to be desired. In the very first paragraph, he produces a distortion of the facts that inevitably leads one to doubt the reliability of the detail in the remainder of the book. He describes how “a sailor came stumbling over a nearby ridge” to where “Kane stood talking with several naval officers on the icy, snow-covered shores of Beechey Island “ (p. 1) to announce that graves from the Franklin expedition had been found. In reality Kane and