

This book stands out as a very readable account of mountaineering before it became the slightest bit trendy or glamorous — when climbing a mountain was done solely for the private adventure and not for equipment endorsements and lecture tours. The equipment used and food eaten is ridiculous in light of our modern-day outfits, yet these four men never complained, had no close calls or epics, and appear to have enjoyed their climb. This is a book that would be very enlightening to our modern generation of pink and lavender clad alpinists who embark upon the annual pilgrimage up Denali with little idea of the roots of their “sport.”

The book ends with a summary of all prior exploration of and attempts to climb Denali. By doing so, Stuck has tied all the strings together into one bundle. Now in this single volume one can make one's way from the first sighting of Denali by Captain Vancouver in 1794 to the first ascent of the highest summit on 7 June 1913.

This book is not only a very entertaining piece of mountain literature but is, as well, a significant piece of mountain history. It deserves a place on the bookshelf of every mountain lover. As well it would make delightful reading for the non-climber. The antique type and photos preserved in this publication add to the sense of history that the book conveys and make it a delightful acquisition.

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THE NORTHERN FOREST BORDER IN CANADA AND ALASKA. By JAMES A. LARSEN. New York: Springer-Verlag, 1989. 272 p. US\$79.50.

The boundary between the northern boreal forest and the arctic tundra has been shown by the meteorologist Reid Bryson and his associates to be related to the median position of the arctic front in summer. This climatic-vegetation tension zone is the topic of Larsen's latest book. (Larsen has also written *The Boreal Ecosystem* (1980) and *Ecology of the Northern Lowland Bogs and Conifer Forests* (1982), both published by Academic Press.)

It is important from the beginning for the reader to understand that Larsen adopts a Baconian view of science. That is, it is his stated intention (p. v) to survey the composition of plant communities as they are affected by environmental factors and not to provide a theoretical framework for community organization. This is somewhat misleading since Larsen's own phytosociological viewpoint is not without its principles. One of the tenets of phytosociology that Larsen upholds is that plants are climatically controlled and that their composition better expresses their ecological relationships to one another and the environment than any other characteristic.

Central to Larsen's organization of this book is the belief that “there is still a place for the expression of data in relatively straightforward presentation, in which the performance of the species . . . is given no analytical treatment, leaving analysis and interpretation to the reader if so desired, using any method selected” (p. 201). This alerts the reader that he should expect the book to be essentially an uncritical collection of observations by different researchers. In this sense the book is very good, providing a complete and up-to-date review of vegetation research in this part of the boreal forest. This research describes the northern forest border as a vast unsettled area (roughly comparable in size to the eastern United States, but essentially without any roads) in which natural processes operate on a vegetation that is still unaffected by Europeans. Areas such as this are becoming increasingly rare and, as such, increasingly more valuable for ecological research.

Is it possible, as Larsen asserts, that from a purely observational approach readers can analyze and draw conclusions about species performance using any method available to them? This is an old controversy about whether it is possible to observe nature with a “value-free language.” Readers will respond differently to this question and will rate the book's value in this context. We believe the book would have been more valuable if Larsen had hypothesized how he thinks the environment is actually coupled to plant population and community dynamics. An example of this preferable approach is found in the gradient studies of J.T. Curtis. Curtis and his associates identified the significant environmental factors and the species tolerance curves of the vegetation in Wisconsin. Further studies then showed the physiological mechanisms that explained the plant's adaptations to these environmental gradients (for example, Wuenschel and Kozlowski, 1971, *Ecology* 52:1017-1023). These studies, unlike Larsen's book, explicitly gave the coupling between the vegetation and the environment.

Larsen, in taking a Baconian approach, can make only general statements, often rather obvious to contemporary ecologists. The conclusions Larsen comes to are that the northern limit of trees and the air mass boundary in summer are well correlated. Changes in atmospheric circulation patterns have caused a displacement of the mean frontal zone during the Holocene with subsequent changes in vegetation boundaries. A complex of factors is involved in the advance or retreat of trees near their limits of growth. Temperature appears to be especially significant, as it limits translocation, water absorption and photosynthesis and is correlated to plant growth. Also the declining availability of nutrients (N,P,K) in soil is one of the other factors reducing tree growth.

In conclusion, the book is of value in providing an overview of the plant ecological research that has been done in the northern forest border of western Canada. However, readers who are hoping to find an explanation or even an hypothesis of how the vegetation in this ecotone is organized will be disappointed.

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NUNIVAK ISLAND ESKIMO (YUIT) TECHNOLOGY AND MATERIAL CULTURE. By JAMES W. VanSTONE. Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 1989. *Fieldiana, Anthropology*, New Series, No. 12. 108 p., 107 figs., bib. Softbound. US\$23.

Isolated by shallow seas in summer and constantly moving ice in winter, the Yupik-speaking people of Nunivak Island were slow to give up their traditional technology and social organization. Indeed, as James VanStone points out (p. 42), “until World War II, Nunivak was about 50 years behind the Seward Peninsula-Norton Sound area in acculturation.” For this reason the publication under review is particularly valuable.

When anthropologist Margaret Lantis spent a year on Nunivak Island in 1939-40 in her study of social organization, she found the people still occupying semi-subterranean houses, the men living apart from their families for much of the year in the *qasig* — the familiar Alaskan Eskimo ceremonial structure serving as a men's house. She also found traditional items of local manufacture in staple use for many subsistence and housekeeping purposes. Although unsure of herself when dealing with material culture, she recorded what she saw in word pictures, photographs, and drawings.

Half a century later, when the fifty-year lag of the people of Nunivak is erased and they have caught up fully in acculturation