

tundra, fire frequency is determined more by weather conditions and ignition sources than it is in temperate areas. Other unique features of fire in circumpolar regions include peat fires, crown fires in spruce forests, and longer fire rotation periods than those in warmer and more arid climates. Some concepts and theories which recur in different chapters as a basis for discussion are paludification-nutrient release and insect-wildfire relationships.

The printing is very high quality and the editing excellent but the book is expensive. Author, geographic, and subject indices are very useful. The only drawback to this book as a review of the current literature is the relatively long interval of time between the presentation of these papers in October 1979 and the appearance of the printed book in 1983. Consequently there are few references to literature published later than 1979. In comparison with other recent fire-in-northern-environments symposia, this book provides a better insight into the role of fire from a circumpolar perspective.

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WATER POLICY FOR WESTERN CANADA: THE ISSUES OF THE EIGHTIES. Edited by BARRY SADLER. The Banff Centre School of Management. Calgary: The University of Calgary Press, 1983. 203 p. Can\$10.00. Softbound.

The Banff Centre School of Management has succeeded in presenting a book, containing ten papers and various commentaries and summaries emanating from the Second Annual National Resource Conference, which should appeal to a wide variety of readers.

The objective of the conference was to discuss the institutional aspects of management of waters crossing provincial boundaries, as well as the all-encompassing aspect of water resources policy and decision-making, in the context of pressing issues of the 1980s. The topics covered reflect the diversity of interpretations the authors placed upon the theme of the conference. The papers begin with an academic presentation of goals and decision-making processes, immediately followed by a sharply contrasting revelation of the political realities surrounding decision-making by government. Subsequent papers include an entertaining discussion of a myriad of western Canadian water problems, first-hand experience of the merits and weaknesses of using an adversary system in the public hearing process, an excellent presentation on the river basin planning process, and a legal discussion of "new" approaches to resolving potential conflict (which favours the status quo). Two informational papers on prairie and northern river basins, followed by an emotional but irrational plea for a better method for water resource decision-making, complete the spectrum of topics.

While the objectives of the conference are addressed, the perspective of time is lacking, so that identification of issues peculiar to the 1980s is missing. Part of the reason for this problem lies in the reader's inability, on the basis of the material presented, to measure the magnitude of past and existing water resource problems in western Canada, so that the postulated opportunities for resolution of issues are without a standard by which to measure their urgency or viability. In this respect, the conference objective of focussing on pressing issues is not met.

Individual biases often come to the fore, reflective of the variety of backgrounds represented by the authors. For this reason readers are cautioned to maintain objectivity throughout the book, because the issues addressed do not have a right or a wrong solution. This view is further reinforced by the observation that most of the papers offer comprehensive problem-identification but few offer constructive solutions. Exemplification of this may be found in a theme common to a number of papers — the problems inherent in planning and decision-making being undertaken by agencies with vested interests in the outcome. No new solutions are proposed.

Another shortcoming is the inability of some authors to address policy formulation and decision-making strictly in the context of water resources. The tendency is to address the problems inherent to the decision-making process in a universal context.

Nonetheless, this book is recommended to water resources decision-makers, planners, and administrators, university and college professors and students, and anyone with more than a passing interest in water resources management. The reader will obtain an insight into the complexity of decision-making surrounding water resource development without being overwhelmed by tedious discussions of the technical details. The material is easy to understand and the editor has supplied refreshing contrasts of differing

perspectives supplied by government administrators, academics, interested private organizations, lawyers, politicians, and the concerned public. The papers are interesting and thought-provoking, and only in a few instances will the reader feel he has regressed into studying for a mid-term political science examination.

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NOTES ON THE VASCULAR PLANTS OF THE MACKENZIE MOUNTAIN BARRENS AND SURROUNDING AREA. By HILAH SIMMONS and SAM MILLER. Illustrated by EVA MELODY. Information Series Report No. 3. Yellowknife: Northwest Territories Renewable Resources Branch, 1982. xi + 132 p. Gratis.

This report is written for consumption by the general public rather than the more informed academic botanist, although it is clearly of interest to anyone who is unfamiliar with Canada's northern plants and wishes a working knowledge of some of the more common types.

The writing style the authors have chosen for their plant notes is easy-going and readable, and reflects the genuine personal interest that northerners often display when they discuss the living things of their land. The species notes are an interesting mix of technical information (particularly on the nature of plant toxins) and anecdotal accounts of historical plant uses and etymology of plant names. Perhaps the best way to demonstrate the nature and style of the report is by quoting entries from three genera, *Lupinus*, *Corydalis*, and *Myosotis*.

Lupinus Lupine

(Lat. *lupus*: wolf, because these plants are thought to rob the soil of its fertility, while actually, being legumes, they enrich the soil by adding nitrogen to it). Some Lupines are poisonous, containing toxic alkaloids. The seed pods poison livestock, especially sheep. Some Lupine rhizomes may be eaten but only if cooked.

L. arcticus

Seeds reputed to be 10,000 years old were germinated by G.A. Mulligan and Dr. A.E. Porsild in 1966.

Corydalis Corydalis

(Gk. *Korydallis*: the ancient name of the crested lark). *Corydalis* has been considered effective for various medical conditions including skin diseases. It has been used as a tonic, a purifying and softening agent, and a stimulant. It has been administered to aid digestion, treat jaundice, expel worms, and promote menstruation. Its powder has been recommended for bone decay and sores. This plant may be abundant following a fire.

C. pauciflora Few-flowered Corydalis.

Myosotis Forget-me-not

(Gk. *mus*: mouse, and *otos*: ear, the leaves of some species being similar to a mouse's ear).

A German legend says a beautiful girl walked with her lover along the banks of the Danube. She saw flowers on an island and expressed a wish for them. Her lover swam to the island and picked some, but was swept away by the swift current on his return. He threw the flowers at her feet calling out "Forget-me-not." She never did.

M. alpestris ssp. *asiatica* Alpine Forget-me not

This is Alaska's State Flower.

From these three examples it is obvious that the report title, though technically correct, does not reflect the broader nature of the notes. As many notes relate to the ethnobotany of the taxa it would be useful if the title reflected this content. I have found that amateur botanists particularly enjoy this aspect of their hobby and such reflection of content in the title would make the document more alluring to the general public.

The report is presented in 8½" × 11" format with cardboard cover stock and staple binding. Text is double-spaced and illustrations are full-page.

It is refreshing to see reports of this nature coming out of the north, supplementing the more common academic documents. The report will be of particular interest to residents of the area, and those who intend to explore the