

Louise Abbott has written on the subject of photography for more than thirty years. Her latest article a review of several new photo books appeared in the Montreal Gazette on December 9, 2011. It was reprinted in the Ottawa Citizen, the Edmonton Journal, and the Victoria Times-Colonist.

FAR-FLUNG AND INTRIGUING PHOTO DESTINATIONS

"A photograph is always a destination," novelist Helen Humphreys wrote, "not concerned with getting there but being there." The destinations in this season's new photo books are far-flung and intriguing.

David Hall's *Beneath Cold Seas: The Underwater Wilderness of the Pacific Northwest* (Greystone Books and the David Suzuki Foundation, 160 pages, \$45) transports readers to frigid waters off the west coast of Canada. The diversity of creatures in this ecosystem is astonishing; Hall's colour photographs of them are astonishing, too. Steller sea lions loom out of the darkness. A Pacific prawn crawls over a barnacle-encrusted ledge. Crimson anemones and red soft coral brighten the kelp forest on the sea bottom.



(Photo by David Hall)

As an underwater photographer, Hall must be ultra-cautious as he contends with a finite air supply, powerful currents, murky waters, proximity to sometimes-dangerous subjects, and the risk of decompression sickness on ascent to the surface.

He must also be ultra-patient. It took him years to find a decorated warbonnet a notoriously reclusive fish out in the open. "I decided to employ piscine psychology.... I turned both my gaze and my camera everywhere except toward my quarry." Hall gradually moved in closer and closer, and made several exposures. In reviewing his images, he discovered a double portrait. "In the dim light one hundred feet below the surface, I had not noticed the second, much smaller warbonnet, probably a male, peeking out from beneath the body of his mate."

A strong environmental message underlies Hall's book. "One cannot learn about the wonders of the ocean without also learning of its suffering," marine biologist Sarika Cullis-Suzuki writes in the introduction. "... Overfishing, climate change, the introduction of foreign species, habitat loss, and pollution have fundamentally altered the sea."



(Photo by Fritz Mueller)

Greystone Books has produced another equally handsome coffee-table book *Yukon: A Wilder Place* (160 pages, \$50), which showcases the colour photographs of Fritz Mueller, with an accompanying text by freelance writer Teresa Earle.

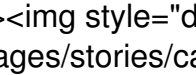
Mueller and Earle, a husband-and-wife team, conceived the idea for this volume over a decade ago when they became smitten with the Yukon and moved to this "overlooked corner of North America that sustains some of the most intact populations of wildlife on the planet, including barren-ground caribou, grizzly bears, wolves, Dall sheep, and migratory birds."

Mueller is a biologist, and his photographs are informed by his knowledge and awe of nature. There are majestic panoramas of mountains and rivers, delicate close-ups of butterflies and flowers, and dramatic scenes of caribou herds in migration, as well as grizzly bears in pursuit of prey.

Earle amplifies readers' understanding of the images. She

explains, for instance, the origin of the dazzling northern lights that Mueller has captured: "Explosions on the surface of the sun energize solar particles that collide with gases in the upper atmosphere, and the agitated oxygen and nitrogen release their energy as color-dancing bands of bright green, red, and purple-pink."

With 35,000 residents in a territory of 480,000 square kilometres, the Yukon remains nearly 80 per cent wilderness. But, Earle notes, "As the Yukon becomes less remote and demand for its abundant resources grows, human impacts creep into its wild margins." This book offers a compelling argument for arresting further encroachment.

 (Photo by Christopher Ayres)

Between House and Barn: A Rural Interlude (Standing Stones Farm Press, 134 pages, \$30 plus \$7 shipping and handling) is a home-grown, soft-covered book produced by a pair of kindred spirits—photographer Christopher Ayres and writer Stephen W. Hyde. It is a loving and extremely touching evocation of the rural landscape and life in the vicinity of Pownal, Maine, where the two have inhabited adjoining farms for three decades. The sensitive black-and-white photographs could only have been created by someone who turns his camera on what he knows intimately, whether it is a cow eyeing a child across a fence or a fox standing in the snow at the forest's edge.

The essays—lyrical meditations on everything from haying and turtle watching to hunting and dying—could only have been written by someone who observes closely, thinks deeply, and stays rooted. "This is the place where the mists gather in the early evening in the long shadow of the woods," Hyde recounts. "This is the place where the peepers first gather in the spring and seek their mates. It is the calling ground of the woodcock, the hunting grounds of the fox, the nesting ground of the saw-whet owl, the playground of the fawns, the common watering grounds of many...."

"It is a place so ordinary and unremarkable to the casual glance that one would probably not look twice at it in passing."

"Yet morning and night, spring, summer, fall, and winter, year after year, I walk by, through, and around this place, and I have come to know it. I have grown to love it, and I am learning to respect it for the unassumingly extraordinary place that it is."

Readers will come to know and appreciate it, too. *Between House and Barn* can be ordered from Standing Stones Farm Press, P.O. Box 101, Pownal, Maine 04069. Email cchyde@maine.rr.com for further information.

Ever since Annie Leibovitz took up photojournalism in 1970, she has portrayed celebrities; in the process, she has become a celebrity herself. She has published several books, mostly of work done on assignment. But her latest, *Pilgrimage* (Random House, 246 pages, \$55), represents a personal quest to learn more about places and people that hold a special meaning for her.

The book includes outdoor scenes, such as the hill country of New Mexico where painter Georgia O'Keeffe found inspiration and the River Ouse where writer Virginia Woolf drowned. But there is an even stronger emphasis on interior views and close-ups of belongings. In this regard the book functions as a virtual curio cabinet with photographs of Abraham Lincoln's top hat, Emily Dickinson's dress, and Annie Oakley's riding boots.

In her text, Leibovitz provides background about the artists, writers, performers, politicians, and other subjects on her eclectic list. She also chronicles her photographic journey. "From the beginning," she concludes, "when I was watching my children stand mesmerized over Niagara

