

visitor at all seasons over the past 25 years), each turn of the page evoked vivid memories of every facet of life in Churchill, from the ice floes in the bay to the one-sided trees on the shoreline, or from the fog-covered ponds in the harbour to the peculiar telephone-line tripods, which resisted the soil movement in this permafrost area. It is from this town and these links to the North (particularly from Pere Volant's superb museum) that the reviewer (and doubtless many other people) first came to admire the Inuit artisans in their ability to release from the ivory and soapstone rock of their surroundings their vibrant life and legend in exquisite carvings for which they are justly famous. These links to the North and the more familiar polar bear migration (and its attendant wildlife tourist "reverse migration") are described carefully in the book, as they affect the everyday life of the town's inhabitants. It is a sign of the thoroughness of the coverage of this pictorial essay that not one of the features of the reviewer's remembrance of Churchill is missing within it. The constant tribute to the indomitable spirit of its people both past and present is not misplaced in the text. The author returns again and again to his admiration for their zeal and to his thanks for their acceptance and friendship towards him and his family.

The book is not without fault, however. The text is somewhat disjointed as it presents a series of vignettes of both people and places, although within each section the prose flows smoothly, with an obvious twinkle of wry humour and perceptive judgement. The regular and irritating use of contractions (it's, didn't) is perhaps a consequence of the narrative style of the prose, while the spelling jumps from Canadian (kilometre, centre) to American (endeavor, harbor, chauffeured [!]) throughout the book. Captions to many photographs are either missing or misplaced in the margins of the book. Nevertheless, these minor flaws do not seriously mar an excellent if lightweight book about a fascinating town.

This book is highly recommended for both lay persons and scholars who are curious about the enigma that is Churchill. The book certainly meets the dual aims of the author in providing the short-term visitor with a glimpse of the year-round life of a unique northern community, while presenting a heartfelt and lasting tribute to its people.

T. Alan Clark  
Physics Department  
The University of Calgary  
Calgary, Alberta, Canada  
T2N 1N4

THE ALASKA ALMANAC. From the EDITORS of *The Milepost*, *The Alaska Journal* and *Alaska Geographic*. Anchorage: Alaska Northwest Publishing Company, 1988. 254 p., maps, charts, illus. Softbound. Cdn\$8.85; US\$6.95.

The *Alaska Almanac's* contents are a veritable iceberg's tip of what makes Alaska different from anywhere else, even in post-development 1988. This book is essential for three audiences: devotees of the Alaska Trivia game, visitors or newcomers to the state and anyone who has an interest in life in the North.

Consider this event from "the Year in Review (1987)":

Fish Collides With Jet: Just before April Fools' Day, a flying fish collided with an Alaska Airlines jet. It was no joke. The flight of a Boeing 737 was delayed for about an hour, while the plane was inspected for damage. "They found a greasy spot with some scales, but no damage," said Paul Bowers, Juneau airport manager. The fish was dropped by a bald eagle as the jet approached. The plane was taking off from the Juneau airport and about 400 feet past the runway's end, the jet crossed the flight path of the bald eagle, fish in talons. A mechanic was dispatched to the plane's next stop in Yakutat to check the plane. The eagle escaped injury [p. 242].

Tall tale that it seems, the incident illustrates all too well the contrasts between modernity and natural history and the continuing risks inherent in contact between them. The *Almanac* gives ample

evidence that what happens each year in the North is tied to natural and human processes that have been in existence for millenia and are not yet tamed or even subordinate to the technology and bureaucracy of our times.

The reader may choose any of 281 topics listed in the index (located at the beginning of the book, in place of a table of contents). To sample 1988 in Alaska, contrast "Alascom" (handles 70 million long-distance calls each year and provides long-distance service to every community of at least 25 persons) with "Akutak" (the native delicacy made of whipped berries, seal oil and snow) and then "Alcoholic Beverages" (Juneau and Anchorage have cut back the number of hours for serving alcohol allowed under state law, Fairbanks defeated a similar motion, and 68 communities have banned both the sale and importation of alcoholic beverages).

An unfortunate aspect of this and any almanac is the difficulty of checking facts and figures for errors and omissions; no references are provided. Furthermore, the content stands in isolation; there is little attempt to attach significance to the facts compiled or to describe their relationship to each other. Interpretation, however, is not the function of almanacs, and the interested reader can, of course, pursue questions or topics of interest through other sources.

The *Almanac* is biased towards the interests of recent rather than aboriginal Alaskans. This is evident in both the topic headings and such entries as "Native People," describing Aleuts, Eskimos and Athapaskans all in one and one-half pages. Following is a very brief description of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, omitting any mention of the revised legislation that has since altered the 1971 act or even the work in progress on revisions in recent years. (Other aspects of native cultures are covered under such entries as "Masks" and "Totems," flawed in that they give an external, materialist emphasis to native culture rather than a current and holistic view.) Even "Subsistence," a contentious issue for many non-native as well as native Alaskans, receives only a brief, albeit accurate description. "Hunting," in contrast, is longer and more detailed.

The diverse entries hint at innumerable fascinating and problematical stories. Some of the most moving are in the obituaries, which include a cross-section of native Alaskans and people who gave most of their lives to the state. The history encompassed in lives such as those of Bergman Kokrine, Paul Nagaruk and Howard Romig brings to life the 20th century in Alaska. Carrying mail by dog team, piloting aircraft to practice bush medicine and transferring ancient Eskimo skills into Nome's school curriculum are only a tiny sample of the challenges Alaskans have met.

E. Bielawski  
Boreal Institute for Northern Studies  
The University of Alberta  
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada  
T6G 2E9

REVIEW OF METHODS FOR EVALUATING THE PHYSICAL CONDITION OF WILD UNGULATES IN NORTHERN ENVIRONMENTS. By JEAN HUOT. Québec: Centre d'études nordiques, series Nordicana No. 50, 1988. Published and printed simultaneously in English and French (back to back). 30 p. in English, 32 p. in French, plus review table, bib., index. Softbound. Cdn\$12.00.

This book summarizes and evaluates measurements of body condition in wild ungulates often used by wildlife biologists and managers. These measurements can be a sensitive way of monitoring both animal performance and the nutritional adequacy of range or habitat for a particular group or population of animals from "the animal's perspective." There have been many papers on body condition of wild ungulates, but little critical validation of common indices. In many species the relationships between indices of fatness and body fat are unknown. A review such as this can be of considerable value to biologists and managers.