

Franklin's expedition of 1845. Ships had to be on hand in the west because, if Franklin's men managed to complete the transit while searches were being undertaken for them in the east, they would almost certainly need assistance, food, and medical attention.

Two vessels, HMS *Investigator* and HMS *Enterprise*, were sent through Bering Strait into the arctic islands to search actively for Franklin, while HMS *Plover* played a waiting game in northern Alaska, ready to help the overdue expedition and communicate news of its safe arrival to an anxious world. Under commanders Moore (1848–52) and Maguire (1852–54), *Plover* spent six consecutive winters as depot ship in the western Arctic, enduring a longer continuous period of arctic residence than any other discovery or search vessel. In summers she was assisted by HMS *Herald* (1849, 1850, 1851) and the privately sponsored yacht *Nancy Dawson* (1849), while a succession of naval ships (HMSs *Daedalus*, *Amphitrite*, *Rattlesnake* and *Trincomalee*) kept her supplied with food.

Despite the lengthy arctic sojourn, *Plover's* voyage did not give rise to any books by participants, and the history of the western search for Franklin has been known mainly through narratives arising out of the more dramatic expeditions of McClure and Collinson to Banks and Victoria islands. Maguire's journal, which has lain more or less undisturbed in the National Library of Ireland for half a century, provides much insight into the less glamorous, but equally important, operations of ships in the Bering and Chukchi seas. The journal makes surprisingly exciting reading, not merely because the ship and crew faced challenging environmental conditions half-way round the globe, but mainly because relationships with the Point Barrow Eskimos were precarious and tense, particularly during the first winter. The Eskimos, much to the discomfiture of *Plover's* crew, were inclined to swarm over the vessel, playing irritating practical jokes on the sailors, begging incessantly for tobacco and other articles, stealing anything loose and portable, and even cutting off slices of wood and lead from the hull. When they outnumbered sailors ashore they became aggressive. When offended they drew weapons and assumed hostile stances. This sort of brinkmanship brought Europeans and Eskimos close to warfare more than once. The men of *Plover* had to remain vigilant at all times, while exercising self-control.

As commander, Maguire faced the difficult task of devising measures which would eliminate pilfering before the ship was reduced to a hulk, without antagonizing the natives. Nearly a thousand Eskimos lived along the coast between Icy Cape and Point Barrow but *Plover* contained only a few dozen men. The survival of the Europeans was at stake, and every effort had to be made to win the friendship and cooperation of the coastal people, in case Franklin's expedition, or a search expedition, emerged from the arctic islands in need of assistance. To his great credit Maguire displayed tolerance and good judgement in the face of provocation, where other men might have resorted to excessive force of arms. Under his skilful

diplomacy catastrophe was averted and the two groups came to appreciate and understand each other better. In the ameliorating climate of personal interaction Maguire and his surgeon John Simpson were able to learn much about the Eskimos, about whom Europeans then knew little. This journal is unique among the narratives of maritime voyages in search of Franklin, because it contains so much ethnographic information, and its value has been enhanced by the inclusion, as an appendix, of Dr Simpson's long essay on the Eskimos of northwestern Alaska.

In the comprehensive introduction of 55 pages Bockstoce describes the Eskimos of northwestern Alaska, summarizes their contact with Europeans, outlines the Franklin search in the western Arctic, and provides biographical sketches of Maguire and HMS *Plover*. The journal itself, abridged by almost a third from Maguire's original manuscript, nonetheless comprises over 380 pages, spread over the two volumes. The last 140 pages contain bibliography, index, and seven useful appendices, of which four are narratives of coastal surveys undertaken in open boats. Two of these voyages, under Pullen and Moore, were made before Maguire took command of the ship in 1852; their inclusion expands the scope of the publication. Editing has followed the usual rigorous, scholarly style of the Hakluyt Society, in which the author's errors, eccentricities, and inconsistencies of word choice, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and form are faithfully retained, with some insertions within brackets by the editor where clarification is necessary.

The two volumes contain three good location maps, two interesting historical maps and five illustrations. Some of the black and white reproductions of paintings are disappointing, suffering from too little or too much contrast, and in both maps and illustrations the text of the reverse sides of pages is visible through the paper. But these are picayune drawbacks in a work of such outstanding merit and interest. John Bockstoce is no armchair editor. By umiak and yacht he has cruised the waters traversed by HMS *Plover*, and his intimate knowledge of the region and its people qualify him superbly for the difficult task of preparing Rochfort Maguire's long journal for publication. Appropriately, only a few months before the first volume came out, he completed the final stage of navigating his motor-sailer *Belvedere* through the Northwest Passage from the Pacific Ocean to Greenland. (W. Gillies Ross, Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, Lensfield road, Cambridge CB2 1ER UK.)

ONE MAN'S ARCTIC WORLD

TO THE ARCTIC: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE FAR NORTHERN WORLD. Young, Steven B. 1989. New York, John Wiley (Wiley Science Editions). 354 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 0-471-62082-3.

Despite its title this is not a travel book or, like Jeanette Mirsky's *To the Arctic!* (1934), a history of Arctic exploration. The sub-title describes it as an 'introduction to the

far northern world'; the preface calls it a 'field guide and general introduction to the common physical and biological features that the scientist, naturalist, and interested traveller will find in the Arctic regions'; and the dust cover adds that it is a 'reference source' and a 'fascinating and often surprising reading experience'.

One has to read the preface and table of contents to learn that the book virtually excludes human life. Its final chapter, although entitled 'The human presence in the Arctic', is limited to prehistoric cultures, in which humanity was 'a natural part of the Arctic environment' (p.322). The important theme of human impact upon the environment is therefore not within the scope of the book, although a number of references are made in passing to human activities.

Steven Young is a biologist and director of the Center for Northern Studies at Wolcott, Vermont, USA. In content his book resembles a text on the physical geography of the Arctic, including weather, climate, vegetation, animal life, ice, landscape evolution, lakes, rivers and seas; but it pays less attention to the spatial distribution of features, characteristics and processes (there are only four maps), and it places less emphasis on the ecological inter-relationships of environmental components (for example the food chains of land and sea are not diagrammed). There is a general subject index (not detailed enough) and a separate index containing the common and Latin names of plants and animals. Each chapter contains a short list of recommended books.

To the Arctic is generously illustrated, with approximately sixty photographs, fifty sketches and twenty diagrams, all in black and white. The photographs are well chosen but many suffer from being printed on soft paper. It seems regrettable that more than a hundred years after the initial application of dry plate photographic technique to the Arctic regions produced sharply focused, high-contrast prints to accompany Nares' book on the expedition of 1875–76, some publishers today are content to supply photographs lacking in sharpness and contrast, through which the type on the back of the page is visible.

It is also unfortunate that although the book is published in the Wiley Science Editions, in which one would expect to encounter an accurate portrayal of the subject, its dust cover describes the Arctic as a land 'covered in snow and ice, shrouded in mystery and danger'. Surely this archaic and misleading image was laid to rest by Stefansson a long time ago, and exhuming it here does a great disservice to the author.

To the Arctic is not my idea of a field guide but it is a reliable introduction to the Arctic environment, enhanced by the author's extensive experience and his apparent love for the subject. As a reading experience it is both enjoyable and informative. The reader feels more like a participant on one of the author's polar journeys than a passive recipient of descriptive information. Charming marginal and chapter-head drawings reinforce the underlying current of curiosity, wonderment and enjoyment of the Arctic

world. (W. Gillies Ross, Scott Polar Research Institute, Lensfield Road, Cambridge CB2 1ER UK.)

NORTH AMERICAN TIMBERLINE

THE NORTHERN FOREST BORDER IN CANADA AND ALASKA: BIOTIC COMMUNITIES AND ECOLOGICAL RELATIONSHIPS. Larsen, J. A. 1988. Berlin, Springer-Verlag (Ecological Studies 70). 255 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 3-540-96753-2. DM 149.00.

The excellent Springer-Verlag series of ecological monographs produced in 1986 *Forest ecosystems in the Alaskan Taiga: a synthesis of structure and function*, edited by K. Van Cleve, F. S. Chapin, L. A. Viereck, C. T. Dyrness and P. W. Flanagan. This book, though very different in approach, is a worthy companion. The work of a single author, it is Larsen's view of the forest-tundra border especially in central Canada. It bears the stamp of one who knows the area intimately and regards its vegetational vagaries as a problem in time. Larsen writes with affection of '... a fascinating biotic region, a captivating land ...', embodying '... a collection of interesting ecological problems, environmental relationships to be discerned in part, perhaps understood to some degree, perhaps one day to be modelled mathematically.' One day possibly, but not yet — at least not by Larsen, whose preference for sound description is manifest.

The book's main topic is the composition of plant communities that are established from time to time between forest and tundra, with some attempts to relate them to climate, soils and other environmental factors. Larsen starts with a review of historical records from early explorers and deals in successive chapters with the forest-tundra transitional belt, physiography of the study areas, the forest border community structure, soils, faunal community relationships, diversity and dominance and climatic influences. These are pages rich in observation and detail. His conclusions are modest — a summary of the observations that to him appear 'the most significant for furthering understanding of the ecological relationships existing in the ecotonal region'. Those who seek firm guidance on why the treeline is where it is may be disappointed, but they will not fail to find this a sourcebook packed with well-organized information, data and personality. (Bernard Stonehouse, Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, Lensfield Road, Cambridge CB2 1ER UK.)

POLAR DESERT PLANTS

BIOLOGY OF POLAR BRYOPHYTES AND LICHENS. Longton, R. E. 1988. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press (Studies in Polar Research). 391 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 0-521-25015-3. £55.00, US\$95.00.

Characteristic plants of polar and alpine deserts, the bryophytes (mosses and liverworts) and lichens have for long been the major study of polar botanists — indeed mosses,