

gain riches and glory for their country and their church ... But for the Aztecs the Spanish victory meant much more than defeat in war. It meant the loss of their entire civilization" (46). This last sentence overstates the loss, for just as Eduardo Matos Moctezuma, chief archaeologist of Aztec sites and consultant for this book, is the direct descendant of the emperor, many other Mexicans are the descendants of the Aztecs, whose culture — more enduring and pervasive than the concept of "civilization" — was not suddenly lost in battle. *Lost Temple of the Aztecs* is itself a rich testimony of cultural memory and metamorphosis, presented in a highly integrative format combining direct testimony, thoughtful interpretation, paintings, and artifacts that will bring alive the Aztec heritage for young readers.

Martha J. Nandorfy is a professor of Spanish at Concordia University in Montreal. She teaches and publishes in the areas of Peninsular and Latin American literatures, culture, and film.

Our Best Friends/Ourselves: Together With Animals

52 Days By Camel: My Sahara Adventure. Lawrie Raskin with Debora Pearson. Annick, 1998. 86 pp. \$14.95, \$24.95, paper, cloth. ISBN 1-55037-518-0, 1-55037-519-9. *Animal Senses: How Animals See, Hear, Taste, Smell and Feel*. Pamela Hickman. Illus. Pat Stephens. Kids Can, 1998. 40 pp. \$14.95. ISBN 1-55074-423-2. *Canadian Endangered Species*. Colleayn O. Mastin. Illus. Jan Sovak. Grasshopper Books, 1995. 31 pp. \$10.95, \$18.95, paper, cloth. ISBN 1-895910-09-9, 1-895910-08-0. *Giraffes*. Bobbie Kalman and Greg Nickles. Crabtree, 1997. 32 pp. ISBN 0-86505-641-2, 0-86505-741-9, cloth, paperback. *In Like A Lion*. Julie Lawson. Illus. Yolaine Lefebvre. North Winds, 1998. 30 pp. \$17.99. ISBN 0-590-24938-X. *On Safari*. Tessa Paul. Crabtree, 1998. 32 pages. ISBN 0-86505-589-0, 0-86505-597-1, cloth, paperback. *Safari*. Robert Bateman. Illus. Robert Bateman. Penguin Canada/Madison, 1998. Unpag. ISBN 0-670-87970-3. *Wild Talk: How Animals Talk To Each Other*. Marilyn Baillie. Illus. Romi Caron. Owl Books, 1996. 32 pp. \$6.95, \$17.95, paper, cloth. ISBN 1-895688-55-8, 1-895688-54-X.

This group of eight books, each one sporting an animal-related title, can be divided into three distinct categories. The first includes five volumes dealing with a number of different species. In the second group containing two books, the author writes about a single species or one particular animal. Finally, the last category with one remaining volume barely deals with animals at all.

Animal Senses, Wild Talk: How Animals Talk to Each Other and *Canadian Endangered Species* form a subgroup of the first category. Each author, taking a particular perspective, presents valuable information about different animals. Pamela Hickman writes *Animal Senses* for readers from seven to eleven years of age to introduce them to the ways animals sense their environment. She offers them ways to investigate through the manipulation of their own sensory perceptions. In so doing she both appeals to and stimulates scientific and intellectual curiosity. Each of the five senses is discussed with details about various species, their sensory organs and how those organs give them special capabilities. We learn about the frog's capacity to see all around without head motion and about the giant squid who has the largest eyes of any creature, allowing for excellent underwater vision. Readers are encouraged to find their own field of vision with instructions for doing so. Other methods are presented, enabling readers to investigate how a hawk or insects see, how to test binocular vision and what it would mean to see as a nocturnal being. Although there are numerous books available dealing with sensory perception, what makes this particular volume especially valuable is the author's skill in helping readers relate directly to the facts she presents. This reviewer was impressed by her explanation of "Losing Touch." She writes that getting used to things allows animals to focus on new feelings. They will not remain distracted by feelings that persist. Using the parallel with how we quickly "forget" the clothes we put on is an excellent idea. In her final section, "Surprising Senses," Hickman reminds us that certain of our animal friends are capable of sensing things and in ways that far outstretch human capabilities. Humans have had to invent high-tech machines to help them do things for which some animals have a natural ability. In this volume, which encourages direct, scientific investigation of the questions and problems at hand, Pat Stephens's clear illustrations are informative and helpful.

In *Wild Talk: How Animals Talk to Each Other*, Marilyn Baillie orients readers by reminding them of different forms of human communication. Then she lists a number of ways various other species of animals or insects communicate with one another in order to achieve similar results. Each chapter or section of the book which follows examines in greater detail one of these methods and its apparent motivation and goals. Baillie chooses from a vast palette and the resulting picture is one of great variety. She includes the graceful mating dance of the Japanese crane and the strong scented territorial markings left by ring-tailed lemurs. She explains how a hungry female firefly can fool another kind of male firefly by purposefully blinking his special mating signal. When the amorous insect flies to her, he will be surprised to find he is her dinner, not her partner. The author also discusses some of the mysteries of animal communication, explaining that humans have not been able to discover why whales sing. There is a concluding "Who's Who" of each animal in the main body of the text, telling where these animals live, their size and some other physical characteristics. The final page offers a summarizing quiz, "Who am I," where readers are given hints and

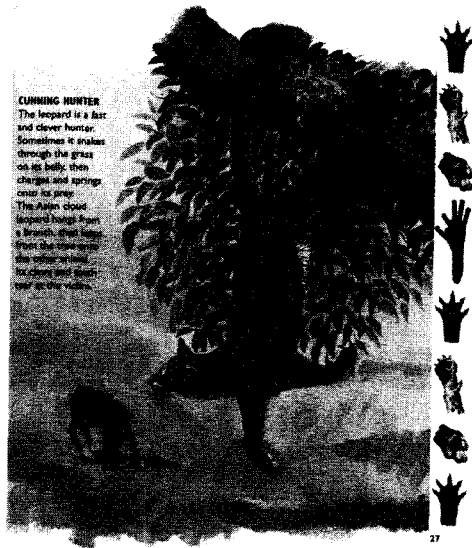


Illustration from *On Safari*

must discern to which species each question refers. Children will enjoy this challenge.

Colleayn O. Mastin's *Canadian Endangered Species* is an informative and important volume. Each section begins with an eight-line two-verse poem summarizing the situation and the problem. There then follows a more extensive prose treatment explaining how the animal once thrived, how humans have disturbed the natural balance and the resulting endangered status of the particular species. A beautiful illustration by Jan Sovak accompanies each entry. Mastin tells the sad story of the extirpated swift fox, extinct in Canada due to the human population's careless disregard for this lovely small creature's needs. Vancouver Island marmots, barely three hundred of whom remain, are threatened by logging developments and ski resorts which are gradually taking over this animal's habitat. Each entry emphasizes the precarious position of these species due to destructive and careless human behaviour. We use poisons and pesticides, rob or otherwise disturb nesting sites, hunt, cause chemical and noise pollution and deadly oil spills. This book conveys important information to young readers. An incorrectly placed comma and a typographical error reveal some slight problem with proofreading.

Two books, *Safari* by Robert Bateman and *On Safari* by Tessa Paul, comprise the second subgroup of the first category. *Safari* is Bateman's first book for children. He presents his fascination with Africa as a fascination for African animals. His tableaux of rhinos, gorillas, zebras, lions, leopards and others are accompanied by information about each, often with the author's personal note or perspective. This reader would have preferred a more extensive textual treatment, but brevity has a certain value and Bateman's

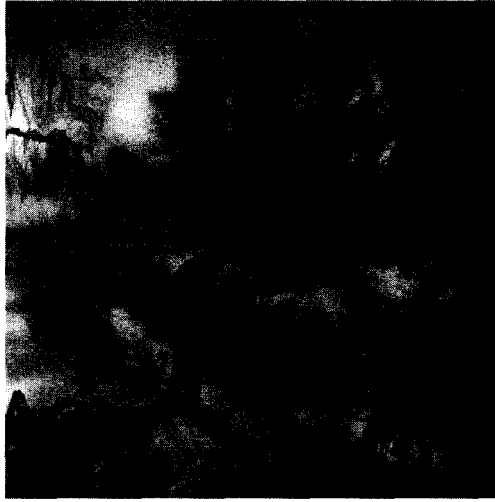
emphasis is clearly that of an artist and a conservationist. His concluding words, an appeal for nature's world and its preservation, are of prime importance. Tessa Paul's *On Safari* includes more information about each animal than does Bateman's book, but this reviewer would still consider the contents rather sparse. In this age of public and educational television where in-depth nature programs are frequently aired, children are primed and able to absorb more from books. *On Safari* includes the distinctive prints of each animal and illustrations that depict clearly and attractively various aspects of the particular animal's behaviour. A useful index and glossary are also included.

The second category, books about a single animal or species, includes *In Like a Lion* by Julie Lawson and artist Yolaine Lefebvre. This beautifully-illustrated volume is crafted for ages five to seven years. The story it tells is based upon the actual occurrence of a cougar's visit to the Empress Hotel in Victoria, BC. The illustrator, employing the wet-on-wet technique of dropping watercolours on soaking wet paper and letting them flow and blend freely, creates hide-and-seek illustrations. She invites readers to search for the hidden cougar. Lawson's story stresses the unique cougar qualities, the special privilege of this remarkable sighting and visit and the respectful, humane manner in which the conservationists ensured that the cougar's needs were met. The story is told in the first person from the point of view of a fictional child of a conservationist. This perspective allows the author to remain in touch with a child's reactions to and involvement with this intriguing, engaging and quite dramatic series of events.

In *Giraffes*, Bobbie Kalman and Greg Nickles present their material in what is generally an orderly, absorbable manner. At times they offer children ways to understand the information by relating it to themselves or to familiar objects. The photography and art work used reinforce the giraffe's amazing qualities. There are, however, several problems with this volume. The system of words included in the "Words to Know" has not been carefully planned. Did the authors/editor intend that those included should be presented in bold in the body of the text? Some are, but some are not. Some words that are printed in bold in the text are not included in "Words to Know." This is puzzling. A game on pages sixteen and seventeen is based on a relatively small map of Africa printed with numbers and icons for the type of terrain. Drawings of nine subspecies of giraffes are also given and readers are to match the number of the giraffe to the number on the map in order to identify each one's habitat. This reader found the exercise somewhat cramped and too busy for comfort.

Finally, Lawrie Raskin's *52 Days by Camel: My Sahara Adventure* is really not about camels. The title refers to a sign indicating the number of days required to travel to Timbuktu by camel. Raskin is in love with the Sahara. He is fascinated by all the ancient and exotic aspects of desert culture, and his excitement is infectious. Nevertheless, this love affair means he

*Illustration from
In Like a Lion*



brings little critical perspective to what he writes. No mention is made of the cruelty involved in weighing down donkeys as beasts of burden: rather we are told how intriguing are the ancient streets of Fez, built at a time when motorized vehicles were not even imagined. Similarly, an interesting photograph of men working in a tannery does not include any comment on the practice of turning animal skins into leather. What about women? Here, too, Raskin's critical faculties are muted. He appears to be excusing the lack of gender equality and the proprietary attitude toward wives. Perhaps his vision has been clouded by his cultural appreciation. As he relates his travels to Fez, Marrakesh, Timbuktu, and the salt mines of Taoudenni, he tells readers many surprising facts about the dangers of desert weather conditions, the value and history of salt, and various aspects of nomad life. The photography is often breathtaking, inviting readers to share in the excitement the author experiences in his adventures. He does tell us a few highly informative facts about camels, but for someone who himself owns over 400 of them, one would hope for more. Raskin's editor is clearly comfortable with split infinitives and does not object to ending a sentence with a preposition or to excessive use of exclamation points. In conclusion, desert enthusiasts will be keen; animal enthusiasts not so.

Leonore Loft has taught grade-one French immersion for the Toronto School Board. Currently she is at work on a book dealing with political animals in eighteenth-century France.