

be of great interest to anyone concerned with issues of Arctic health. (Julie Cruikshank, Department of Anthropology, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia V6T 1Z1, Canada.)

BRIEF REVIEWS

SPERM WHALES. Jonathan Gordon. 1998. Granttown-on-Spey: Colin Baxter Photography. 72 p, illustrated, soft cover. ISBN 1-900455-52-8. £11.00.

It is not always easy for experts in a particular field to condense their knowledge in a way that is accessible to the general public. Jonathan Gordon, however, has succeeded admirably in his gorgeously illustrated paperback *Sperm whales*. The book is divided into six sections, comprising a general introduction to cetaceans and sperm whales in particular, social behaviour, diving biology, a guide to acoustics, current research, and where sperm whales can be seen, including the kind of boat trips available for would-be whale-watchers. The last page contains a brief summary of 'sperm whale facts,' including body-size information and details of gestation and lactation. There is also a page-long index and a very short bibliography for those interested enough to pursue the subject further.

Gordon adopts a 'chatty' narrative style, including vivid personal observations and impressions from his own 20-year career in sperm-whale studies. While perhaps irritating to a serious marine biologist, it should be remembered that this is not intended to be an academic text, and that any book that generates an interest in cetaceans among the general public might be deemed a worthwhile venture in itself. This book would be a valuable addition to any school library, and its clear, large-format print will make it particularly attractive to children.

The photographs in this short volume are beautiful, many of them showing close-up images of sperm whales complete with scars and barnacles. Some are taken from

boats, usually with stunning backdrops of purple mountains or orange sunsets. Others are taken underwater, and comprise a remarkable diary of a year in the life of a sperm whale, ranging from a huge male surrounded by smaller females and calves, to underwater 'dances' between members of the school, and mothers and calves. This WorldLife Library book is one of a series of colourful guides to natural history published by Colin Baxter Photography.

SECRETS OF ESKIMO SKIN SEWING. Edna Wilder. 1998. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press. 131p, illustrated, soft cover. ISBN 1-889963-12-7. US\$12.95.

In *Once upon an Eskimo time*, Edna Wilder told the story of a typical year among the Eskimos of Seward Peninsula, Alaska, before the coming of Europeans. No one could have been better placed to do so. Wilder's mother was the redoubtable Nedercook, who lived to be more than 100 years old, in full possession of her wits. Originally published in 1976 by Alaska Northwest, *Secrets of Eskimo skin sewing*, is more than simply the definitive guide to sewing techniques among the Inupiat Eskimo. Materials, techniques, and products are set firmly in their context of traditional life. A place, however, is also found for modern innovations (zippers, etc), where they have functions to serve, and, as the cover reminds us, the 'techniques [are] adaptable to simulated fur & leather.' Throughout, the approach is eminently practical, as chapter titles in Part One 'How to do it' make clear: 'Before you begin,' 'Preparing hides and skins,' 'Tanning hides,' 'Patterns and beadwork,' and 'Cutting and sewing the fur.' Part Two, 'Things to make,' gives detailed instructions for the making of items such as fur mittens, mukluks, parkas, and Eskimo toys. It is good to have Wilder's handbook in print once more, and this publication exemplifies well the fine contribution made by the reprints series of the University of Alaska Press.