

paper, by Frits Böttcher, states an extreme view: that there is little evidence of global warming and little need for current international treaties emphasising environmental issues. The assertion that the 'well orchestrated efforts of the inner circle of science policy makers' have manipulated governments and the public to further their own scientific aspirations is not worthy of a member of the scientific community.

This account of the global warming debate is a useful source of information for the side of the debate that has decided that the issue has been blown out of proportion, leading to a waste of scientific resources. There is, then, a real danger that the casual reader of this volume will be left with a one-sided view of the global warming issue. I would caution the reader that there is as much, if not more, evidence pointing toward a very real risk of environmental catastrophe. It is short-sighted indeed to criticise the findings of theoreticians, without whom there would be no reason to investigate the practicalities of the situation with a view to preventing any possibility of an ecological disaster. Nevertheless, the book is useful for an introduction to the political considerations of the global warming issue and as part of wider reading for the person wanting to consider all the current issues associated with this debate. (Norman Davis, Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, Lensfield Road, Cambridge CB2 1ER.)

THE VANISHING ARCTIC. Bryan and Cherry Alexander. 1996. London: Blandford/Cassell. 192 p, illustrated. Hard cover: ISBN 0-7137-2530-3; £20.00. Soft cover: ISBN 0-7137-2699-7; £14.99.

The vanishing Arctic is a book every polar reader should have. The photographs, as one would expect from Bryan and Cherry Alexander, are stunning, but I was unprepared for the flow of the text. I began by scanning the book for this review, but soon found myself reading it avidly. Bryan Alexander paints word pictures of Arctic life just as well as he photographs it. All who have had the good fortune to travel to high latitudes will be transported there by this book; I could hear the swish of runners across snow and feel the wind buffeting my back as each tale progressed.

The reader is led by well-written text and beautifully composed images into the lives of five Arctic families. The Cree from the Canadian sub-Arctic and Saami from Lapland seem strange bedfellows with northwest Greenland Inuit and Siberian Nenet, but the mixture works well. All have been affected in one way or another by encroachment from the south, and much of the value of the book lies in the account of how these different groups have managed the changes. The Saami, perhaps, have changed most and have, one feels, become almost westernised. This is a path it appears the Nenet will rapidly have to tread, yet each culture manages to retain traditional practices of hunting or herding. Time and again Bryan Alexander shows that these people have far more sympathy for the Arctic environment than most 'developed nations.' Just one example:

the Inughuit of northwest Greenland have always banned the use of snowmobiles for hunting.

Each chapter starts with a brief history and short description of a native group. This leads with a simple break into the story of a family from that group. How much better it would have been to start the chapter with Bryan Alexander's text — as each is clearly an account of a journey that he has made — and put the history and generic descriptions into a box. Indeed, my main criticisms of the book are about the general poor standard of design and, sad to say, very poor quality reproduction of the pictures. A token map is included at the beginning, but it is insufficient and does not even show the areas that each group occupies nor all the places mentioned in the text. This is irritating and requires the reader to find an atlas to follow some passages. The index is similarly rather shallow; for example, the Inughuit have only one entry, yet a whole chapter is devoted to them.

But these are minor deals in such a glorious book, and it is to be hoped they are corrected in future editions. This is clearly an environmental book that starts with a pictorial essay of the great northern wilderness and, after visiting the five cultures, ends on the disastrous development of oil and gas fields in the Yamal Peninsula and the personal tragedy it causes to one Nenet family. It is well worth buying for the stories Bryan Alexander weaves, and even more so for the images. (David Rootes, Poles Apart, PO Box 89, Bourn, Cambridge CB3 7TF.)

SCHWATKA'S LAST SEARCH: THE NEW YORK LEDGER EXPEDITION THROUGH UNKNOWN ALASKA AND BRITISH AMERICA. Arland S. Harris (Editor). 1996. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press. xviii + 278 p, illustrated, soft cover. ISBN 0-912006-87-0. \$US20.00.

Frederick Schwatka is best remembered as the leader of the American Geographical Society's Franklin search expedition of 1878–1880, an expedition made famous by the writings of the second-in-command, William Henry Gilder of *The New York Herald* (Gilder 1881). Schwatka's search, as it became known throughout the western world, was significant for three reasons: it was an early instance of white expedition members voluntarily adopting the same diet as the Inuit and of them following Inuit practices by living off the land; the members not only completed the longest sledge journey then on record, 3251 miles, but did so without any deaths or serious illnesses; and in the spring of 1879 they found a number of relics and skeletal remains from Franklin's expedition that had not previously been discovered (see related article beginning on page 327).

Schwatka was a multi-talented, hard-driven graduate of the United States Military Academy, who was not only a lieutenant in the US Army, but a bar-certified lawyer and a qualified medical doctor from Bellevue Medical College in New York City. In 1883, at the direction of General Nelson A. Miles, then commanding the US Army's Department of the Columbia, Schwatka made a military reconnaissance of relatively unknown and uncharted parts