The World of Northern Evergreens – 2nd Edition

E.C. Pielou. 2011. ISBN-13 978-0-8014-7740-9 Cornell University Press
\$ US 19.95 + shipping. Contact: www.cornellpress.cornell.edu/book/

This book like other recent books that Evelyn Pielou has written would appeal to a student of science or a hobby naturalist. I found the writing style and illustrations interesting and believe that it would serve as a valuable resource to anyone with a scientific interest in northern forests with one caveat (which I describe at the end of this review). The book updates information published in the first edition released in 1988. In particular, the author tries to explain the difference between broadleaved and conifer trees and has added information on the ecological value of our forests. Even though both broadleaved trees and conifers are called trees they are very different. The structure of their wood, roots, leaves or needles and reproductive features are all different with about 160 million years separating the arrival on earth of these two types of perennial plants.

The author was motivated to revise her first edition as she believes people need to know about the true value of the ecological services obtained from our northern forests. She describes some of the ecological functions such as decom-

position, seed dispersal by birds and mammals and insect foraging that occur. The last few chapters describe natural and human-caused disturbances and their impacts on the forest. Unfortunately, she fails to describe the dynamic nature of forests and to integrate this understanding in her explanation of the impacts of human-caused disturbances. She also does not seem to be aware of the changes to logging Canada's northern forests when clearcut silviculture is used. This is a shame as 11 of the 13 chapters provide valuable thoughtful descriptions of these forests while two chapters near the end of the book describe forests that are clearcut only in their initial recently cutover stage. There is no attempt to explain that these cutovers grow into forests and to describe the similarities and differences between these forests and naturally regenerated forests. I was hoping that this book would be able to contribute to elevating the discussion that Canadians need to have on their publicly owned forests so that we can move from being a forest nation to a nation with a forest culture. Unfortunately, we

will have to wait for other authors to describe the dynamic nature of our forests and how human activity changes the function of our forests.

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Destination Algonquin Park— Tracks to Cache Lake and the Highland Inn

Donald J. Beauprie, 2011. ISBN 978-1-9269-6211-5 General Store Publishing House, Renfrew, Ontario. \$ 29.95 + shipping.
Contact: orders@gsph.com

My personal library now overflows with just about every book on Algonquin Park that I have been able to get my hands on. The irony is that having “cut my teeth” in the boreal provincial parks of northern Ontario around Chapeau and Wawa, I originally developed something of a mild prejudiced disdain for Algonquin, without having ever really experienced the Park firsthand. That all changed about 12 years ago when a friend and I finally took a canoe into the interior, after at least a decade hiatus from being on the water with a paddle—and I discovered per-

sonally the justification for all the fuss. After many subsequent trips, my now quite positive sentiments about the park have been further strengthened and reinforced both by extensive canoeing and voracious reading. All that being said—I openly admit to a complete lack of objectivity with my review of *Destination Algonquin Park: Tracks to Cache Lake and the Highland Inn*.

I think that all readers, not just those interested in history, will be immediately absorbed by this book as it embarks on a wonderful trip into the past, and continues on to cover a lot

of new and largely unexplored and perhaps under-appreciated time and terrain. It is an in-depth and solid interpretation of a part of Canadian history that both needs and warrants more attention. *Destination Algonquin Park* is a welcome addition to the growing literature of what many call Canada's first "national" park. Most importantly, it is a great read from a fine writer and storyteller. The book is divided into three parts. In part one we learn about legendary timber-baron J.R. Booth's efforts to build the Ottawa-Arnprior and Parry Sound Railway through the Park, which opened the area up for both logging and eventually tourism. Part two describes the birth, life and death of a grand old wooden hotel—the Highland Inn, with many interesting and enjoyable tales of its guests and staff. In part three, Beuprie tells many stories and anecdotes about the interesting people and places on Cache Lake.

Institute member Dave Lemkay of the Algonquin Section, an exuberant and knowledgeable history buff, contributed significantly to *Destination Algonquin Park*, providing much of the information for part one, particularly the details covering Booth's rail line. This input, which will be of most interest to forest history folk, helps set the stage for the history of tourism generally in Algonquin Park, and particularly at Cache Lake as covered in parts two and three. The Highland Inn was the monumental railway resort that emerged at Cache Lake once the Ottawa-Arnprior and Parry Sound Railway crossed the landscape. The narrative in part one weaves together all of the disparate news stories from a few dozen papers of the day, and chronicles

the development of the project. More importantly, it provides an understanding of the manner in which J.R. Booth managed his affairs as the pre-eminent timber baron that he was. His grand plan to build the railway was but one piece of the puzzle: to connect his timber limits to his milling at the Chaudière, and shipping the lumber ultimately to major markets in the US and beyond. By four-season overland transport of timber, he revolutionized the sawmilling business by eliminating the effect of winter freeze-up that curtailed the traditional river drive, and this inadvertently created the opportunity for the Algonquin tourism and recreation boom.

Part one demonstrates the dichotomy of big business interests that included Booth's Great Lakes elevators, steamships, and bridges across the St. Lawrence River (at Coteau) and the local personalities in Ottawa Valley's small towns. Long-forgotten place names that appear in the 100-year-old clippings are captured and woven into the narrative. As this railway was being planned, and its route was being negotiated with many small hamlets, it was business of major import to them collectively, as significant as the rural areas of the country getting broadband internet service today. The railway, to the inhabitants along the route, was life-changing on every scale!

Dave Lemkay provided the following quote for this review: "*On a personal note, I too camped in Algonquin Park as a youngster. I have vivid memories of visiting the Highland Inn and seeing the train arrive and drop off visitors. Presently, our summer home on Golden Lake is adjacent to the Ottawa-Arnprior*

and Parry Sound railway line. There is hardly a trip that I take over the remaining rail-bed or converted roadway that I don't think of all the people who took the rail through these same hills and alongside the same shoreline—J.R. Booth, Sir Wilfrid Laurier and all the other dignitaries of the day—the military men and the regular farmer who made a trip to town. In its heyday, there was a train every 20 minutes along this line!"

In closing, the great German author Thomas Mann (*The Magic Mountain*) once said "*Only the exhaustive is truly interesting.*" *Destination Algonquin Park* is not a superficial book by any means. It is comprehensive, detailed and fascinating. Its many photos and illustrations are in themselves an intriguing historical record of days gone by, and even without knowing the people in the photos personally, they illicit a strong sense of nostalgia. After reading this book, one comes away with a very in-depth and vivid understanding, as well as strong appreciation of a significant part of Algonquin Park and Ottawa Valley History.

Destination Algonquin Park is a very rewarding read. It further bolsters my personal appreciation and fondness for the Park and all its wonderful natural and human history. However there is undoubtedly so much more that could be told and written about Algonquin Park, and I hope more historical gems like this are in the works, despite my now overflowing library of books dedicated to this magnificent and special part of our planet.

Reviewed by **John Pineau**