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Review: A Field Guide to Mammals of North America

By Fiona A. Reid

Reviewed by Kathy Piselli

Atlanta-Fulton Public Library, USA

Fiona A. Reid. *A Field Guide to Mammals of North America*, 4th ed, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2006. 592 pp. ISBN: 0-395- 93596-2 (Trade Paper). US \$20.00.

The 4th edition of this guide is a much-expanded revision of the 3rd edition published in 1976. As expected, species classifications, maps depicting ranges, and other information have received an update. The 4th edition is expanded in many other ways.

Illustration: While the plates for the 3rd edition were the same as those for the 2nd, those for the 4th are completely new. The Species Accounts section is sprinkled throughout with National Geographic-quality photographs, with captions that aid in identification.

Reid's illustrations are the highlight. Trained in biology at Cambridge University in England, Reid "slipped into scientific illustration work without any formal training" according to her website (<http://www.hopscotch.ca/fionareid>). She works today in the Centre for Biodiversity and Conservation Biology at the incomparable Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto and is a worthy successor to the 3rd edition's illustrator, Richard P. Grossenheider. Larger animals are drawn with a little background, which is an identification aid: The Bighorn Sheep is depicted on high rocks while the wild boar walks on forest leaves (look up for a jaguar). The 3rd edition expressed habitat for some animals with some line drawings. The 4th edition pays particular attention to expanding listings of the smaller mammals.

References: the 4th edition uses color photos of skulls instead of the sometimes shadowy black and white photos (or line drawings of marine mammals) found in the previous edition. While the 3rd references each

skull to both map and text, the 4th references only to text. And while the 3rd compiles all the dental formula in a single table so similar species can be compared side-by-side, dental formulae in the 4th ed. are given individually with each listing. New for the 4th edition are the additional depictions of antlers and line detail drawings of teeth.

There is a depth of narrative in the Species Accounts section resulting in a book that combines the detailed information of Walker's *Mammals of the World* with the simplicity of a beginner's field guide. In 1976, the 3rd edition apologized for adding bulk, but maintained that it "still fitted the pocket easily." By no stretch can the 4th edition fit in the average shirt or jeans back pocket; indeed, it would add nearly 2 lbs. of weight to a hiker's pack. So, probably not suitable for that 3 month long trip on the Appalachian Trail, but definitely packed with information for naturalists, ecologists, and those who study mammals. Recommended for general library collections, high schools and middle schools.

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