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Review: Chiricahua Mountains: Bridging the Borders of Wilderness

By Ken Lamberton

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Ken Lamberton. Photographs by Jeff Garton. *Chiricahua Mountains: Bridging the Borders of Wilderness*. Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 2003. 86 pp. ISBN 0-8165-2290-1 (paperback). US\$13.95 Alkaline paper.

Want more evidence that good things come in small packages? Try this small book. Its 79 pages of text and photographs are a vivid exploration of the Chiricahuas. Ken Lamberton, a freelance writer who holds degrees in biology and creative writing from the University of Arizona, won the John Burroughs medal for outstanding nature writing in 2002 for his first creative nonfiction book, *Wilderness and Razor Wire*. Jeff Garton, whose 14 stunning photographs beautifully enhance the text, has had his work published in five books and magazines such as *Arizona Highways*, *Audubon*, and *Sierra*.

The text is the record of a trip Lamberton took with his friend Chuck LaRue hoping to spot a short-tailed hawk. They spent four days in the Chiricahua Mountains, a range which forms a link between the Rockies and the Sierra Madres and which contains five of North America's seven major life zones. As Lamberton travels through the mountains, he points out each of these life zones and notes the different flora and fauna in each. He also describes the geology and its formation and interjects human-interest stories about the area and the people who have lived there from the Apache to the current residents.

The Chiricahua Mountains are a birdwatcher's paradise, which draws birders from all over the world. Lamberton saw only 103 different bird species on this trip. However, he was compensated by the chance to connect with "the whole extraordinary geographical arrangement ... conjunction of biological communities ... landscape ... story of life" (p. 17).

Anyone interested in learning about the environment of the Chiricahua Mountains and nature in general can benefit from this book. It will make an excellent addition to any library. Intended for a general readership, this book can be used for pure pleasure reading or as a supplemental guide on a trip into the Chiricahua Mountains in southern Arizona. Even those unaware that "the name Chiricahuas is synonymous with birds" (p. 9) or those who have no drive to climb through five life zones on one outing will enjoy the rich imagery, the poetry, of this account; and the photographs alone are worth

the price of the book.

The bibliography guides those who would delve into some of the many topics touched in this volume. To those who enjoyed *Chiricahua Mountains*, I would recommend two other books in the series, *The Black Rock Desert* and *Cedar Mesa*. These fascinating books were reviewed in the Earth Day 2003 issue of *Electronic Green Journal*. If you need more I would also recommend Weldon Healds' *The Chiricahua Mountains* (originally titled *Sky Island*).

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