Living With Wolves
JIM DUTCHER & JAMIE DUTCHER
Mountaineers Books, $34.95 cloth, ISBN 1-59485-000-3

The authors have already made a significant contribution to the public's understanding of wolves, having produced Wolves at Our Door and Living With Wolves, documentary films aired on the Discovery Channel. In this handsome coffee-table book format, produced in conjunction with The Wilderness Society, their continuing fascination is evident, dramatized through a range of color photographs that capture the complex behaviors of a single gray wolf pack resident in the Sawtooth Wilderness in Idaho. The photos dominate this title, a range of dramatic poses, interactive pack behavior, portraits of individual animals in the pack, pups, hunting, play, and other quintessential wolf activity.

The accompanying text presents a brief introduction to the behavioral intricacies of wolves and wolf packs, and includes personal comments by the authors on their relationship with this pack, a bond that developed over years of observation and recording.

Perhaps the most recognizable signature of wolves in North America is their individual and group howling, a subject also covered in photos and text, as well as in an accompanying CD of wolf vocalizations also produced by the authors. This book is unblushingly supportive of this major predator and comes at a time when reintroduction programs have been a clear success—at least from the wolf's perspective—and are expanding.

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Mammals of the National Parks
Conserving America's Wildlife and Parklands
JOHN H. BURDE & GEORGE A. FELDHAMER
Johns Hopkins University, $29.95 cloth, ISBN 0-8018-8097-1

Too big to be a practical field guide, this title could nonetheless inspire many readers to head for the outdoors, particularly the grand wildlife havens that are our national parks. From Acadia (Bar Harbor, Maine) to Zion (Springdale, Utah), text and illustrations focus on the range and uniqueness of North American animal species found in these protected environments. The first section of the book profiles the parks with basic information about their establishment, scenery, special features, conservation issues, and the animals visitors may see. The second section profiles the animals, from the Virginia opossum (the only marsupial mammal found in the United States) to mountain sheep. Paralleling the treatment in the first section, the mammal profiles here include basic descriptions, behavior, and ecological perspective, as well as “Conservation Concerns,” which includes information on how the species are managed within the parks.

A primary theme is observation: mammals that visitors are likely to see and especially those that are prime attractions, such as elk (Rocky Mountain National Park), bald eagles (Kenai Fjords National Park), and bison (Theodore Roosevelt National Park), to name a few.

Potato City
Nature, History, and Community in the Age of Sprawl
SUE LEAF

North Branch, Minnesota, was once known as Pot-8-0 City, a faded label around which the author narrates this descriptive study. The sandy soil native to the area is a key element she includes in her quest to understand this quintessential midwestern place, a primary substance that made potatoes a prime crop and that provides a critical link within the local ecosystem. While a contemporary thread links the reader to the modern reality of North Branch, there is always the strong influence of seasons past, memories of severe drought, and the impact of new farming technologies and the railroad, stories she uncovers in her research and weaves into the activities of the present. A new arrival in the early 1980s, Leaf found the town initially underwhelming.

At first glance, North Branch has little to recommend it. It is not pretty, nor distinctive. ... When we moved to town in 1984, it seemed pinched in other ways as well.

Over time, she warms to the spot, in part because of her growing sense of character for a place once manifested and shaped by potatoes and farming commerce. In more recent years, the impact of the interstate highway and sprawling developments have had an additional effect on this small community, a reminder that change is ever present, representing threat as much as benefit.

The Last Undiscovered Place
DAVID K. LEFF
University of Virginia, $27.95 cloth, ISBN 0-8139-2264-X

David K. Leff introduces us to his subject in the first paragraph of his foreword.

You can’t visit the Collinsville depicted in these pages. It’s not that the village is a mythical Brigadoon appearing periodically from the mist. To the contrary, you can’t find this Collinsville precisely because it is a real place, beset by the give and take of time.

In this exploration of the environment of a small town, he shares with readers his decision to move to an old, established Connecticut community, driven by a rationale likely familiar to many modern city dwellers, especially those with families to raise.

Collinsville in many ways fulfills nostalgic ideals of antiurban quaintness, but its past and its unique features, as described in detail, provide a historical perspective on the growth and function of communities in this part of New England. Included in this sense of place are seasonal activities, the ebb and flow of business ventures, and the connectedness of this appealing location to the natural world that surrounds it.

REVIEWER: Kim Long is a long-time contributing editor to TBR.