

# Books

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**At War Within: The Double-Edged Sword of Immunity**—William R. Clark. After providing a thorough synopsis of how the immune system works, Clark looks at how the "sixth sense" can often turn from a loyal protector into a Judas. Beginning his story with the first known attempt to conquer the immune system—immunizations against small-pox—Clark examines in depth a number of immune deficiency diseases, from allergies to AIDS. He also shows how the body's defense system works almost too well against transplanted organs. Concluding chapters address the mind's power in influencing the immune system. OUP, 1995, 275 p., hardcover, \$25.00.

**Impact Jupiter: The Crash of Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9**—David H. Levy. The codiscoverer of the comet that ultimately crashed into Jupiter last summer shares his extraordinary experiences tracking the comet, witnessing the collision, and summarizing its aftermath. Written in the first person, the book covers the methods of observation, the known and predicted consequences, and the U.S. government's reaction—installing comet-detecting devices. Plenum, 1995, 290 p., b&w photos, hardcover, \$25.95.

**Israel: Splendors of the Holy Land**—Sarah Kochav. Oversized and lavishly illustrated, this book provides an overview of the history, archaeology, people, and cultures of ancient and modern Israel. The text is concise, but the photographs and illustrations admirably present and recreate that which is no longer standing and explain that which is. Thames Hudson, 1995, 292 p., color photos and illus. hardcover, \$50.00.

**Leading Minds: An Anatomy of Leadership**—Howard Gardner with Emma Laskin. A professor of education at Harvard, Gardner attempts to construct the foundation of leadership. First, he defines a leader as someone able to influence the thoughts, behavior, and feelings of others across many domains. He then contends that the people who excel at this pursuit are those best able to convey stories, whether directly, through speech, or indirectly, through equations, ideas, or art. Gardner argues that the most effective leaders resolve issues in their own minds and then change the minds of others—skills that are honed as children. Eleanor Roosevelt, J. Robert Oppenheimer, George C. Marshall, Margaret Mead, and Martin Luther King Jr. are among the 11 people whose style and methodology are analyzed in light of these theories. Basic, 1995, 400 p., hardcover, \$27.50.

**National Audubon Society Field Guide to African Wildlife**—Peter C. Alden, Richard D. Estes, Duane Schmitter, and Bunny McBride. Small enough to fit easily into a backpack on safari, this guidebook nonetheless manages to stuff its pages full of data pertinent to the wildlife and nature reserves of Africa. Introductory essays about the geography of the continent and particular points of interest are followed by color photographs and descriptions of 850 of the most common species of African mammals, birds, reptiles, and insects. A glossary and indexes make the book especially useful. Knopf, 1995, 988 p., color photos and b&w illus., paperback, \$19.00.

**The Physics of Star Trek** — Lawrence M. Krauss. Just how close is the world of Kirk and Picard to the real world of modern physics? Closer than you might think, reports Krauss as he illustrates aspects of theoretical physics through scenarios played out on *Star Trek* and its offshoots. He explains what warps when you are traveling at warp speed, what happens when you get beamed up, and what antimatter is and how it relates to the Enterprise, among a variety of other things. He also explores the feasibility of some of the Enterprise's adventures, as well as which of the finer points of theoretical physics the creators got right and wrong. Basic, 1995, 188 p., b&w plates, hardcover, \$18.50.

**The Sixth Extinction: Patterns of Life and the Future of Humankind**—Richard Leakey and Roger Lewin. As in their previous collaborations, *Origins* and *Origins Reconsidered*, Leakey and Lewin combine their expertise in paleoanthropology and evolutionary biology in order to assess the evolutionary future of *Homo sapiens*. They present data indicating that more than 30,000 species are eradicated from Earth each year at the hands of humans, matching the 65 percent rate prevalent in previous mass extinctions. Knowledge gleaned about past extinctions from studying fossil records and the organization of ecological communities bolsters their argument that humans must be preservation-minded and learn to live in harmony with other species. Doubleday, 1995, 271 p., b&w illus., hardcover, \$24.95.

**What Are Hyenas Laughing at, Anyway?**—David Feldman. For anyone who answered Feldman's call at the end of his last Imponderables book, this is your opportunity to see if he heard you. Why do saltines have holes? Why do buildings have ledges? Why is the flag painted backwards on aircraft and space shuttles? Why does pepper make us sneeze? This assortment is representative of the more than 100 readers' questions posed and answered. Putnam Pub Group, 1995, 283 p. b&w illus., hardcover, \$21.95.

**Why the Earth Quakes: The Story of Earthquakes and Volcanoes**—Matthys Levy and Mario Salvadori. Two structural engineers explain in lay terms the fundamental causes of earthquakes and volcanoes and then apply this knowledge to buildings. Levy and Salvadori investigate some of the greatest natural disasters to date and evaluate what was learned from those experiences, especially in terms of what withstood the shock and what did not. They indicate where such occurrences are most likely to happen and discuss engineering methods for producing shock-proof buildings, retrofitting structures, and evaluating why some buildings collapse and others do not. Norton, 1995, 215 p., b&w illus., hardcover, \$25.00.

**Wild Life: The Remarkable Lives of Ordinary Animals**—Edward Kanze. In 50 eloquent vignettes, naturalist Kanze examines the bizarre behaviors of some common species thriving in North America. Divided into four sections—American Birds, Fur and Wide (mammals), In Cold Blood (reptiles and amphibians), and Odds and Ends—the book introduces crabs with blue blood, birds with bad attitudes, squirrels that can be mistaken for bats, and the feeling of a porcupine's quills. Crown Pub Group, 1995, 212 p., b&w illus., hardcover, \$21.00.

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As almost everyone knows, a plant takes in CO<sub>2</sub> and gives off O<sub>2</sub>.

However, what everyone doesn't know is that plant tissues oxidize after death, binding the same amount of free oxygen that any given plant produced in photosynthesis—unless the plant dies in a swamp, bog, or marsh. There, it sinks to the bottom to undergo anaerobic reduction to hydrogen and carbon. (Decomposing critters may also reduce plant tissues in their guts, but the ability of wetlands to isolate oxygen from this process is far greater.)

Knowing this, swamp gas may actually begin to smell better to some folks.

Countries such as Brazil and Colombia are roundly criticized for destroying the rain forests and the free oxygen produced there. However, we would do well to look to the wetland destruction our country has experienced.

Redefining our environmental regulations may seem like a picnic in comparison to cajoling a Third World nation away from a slash-and-burn means to quick economic gains.

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