

# Books

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**Fire on Earth: How Asteroid and Comet Collisions Have Shaped Human History—And What Dangers Lie Ahead**—John Gribbin and Mary Gribbin. A newsworthy topic since the crash of Comet Shoemaker-Levy into Jupiter last year, meteorite collisions with Earth have shaped history and human evolution. The Gribbins present evidence of past collisions and describe what the future holds in the way of such occurrences. As it is now believed that an asteroid was responsible for the demise of the dinosaurs—evidence of the crash can be found in a crater in the Yucatán peninsula of Mexico—the authors present a case for lesser impacts such as that in Tunguska, caused by a fragment of leftover material from an interplanetary stream that had already visited Earth twice. St. Martin, 1996, 264 p., hardcover, \$23.95.

**The Folklore of Birds**—Laura C. Martin. In addition to general descriptions, habitat information, and illustrations, Martin provides fascinating details about the heritage, lore, common uses, and habits of almost 100 birds, from the blackfooted albatross to the common yellowthroat, in this delightful, insightful reference. For example, the entry on yellow-billed cuckoos asks why cuckoos are considered lazy and why they are thought to be capable of forecasting the weather and the future. Originally published in hardcover in 1993. Globe Pequot, 231 p., b&w illus., paperback, \$15.95.

**Hammond Citation World Atlas**—Hammond, Inc. Without being too big or difficult to use, this atlas combines detailed maps with current data on specific countries and states. Color bands indicate political boundaries. Listings of cities include populations, and metropolitan areas are mapped out in large scale as well. Each country's flag is pictured next to a map of the country's topography and information about its area, population, vegetation, climate, economy, natural resources, industries, and so on. Hammond, 1996, 328 p., color illus., paperback, \$19.95.

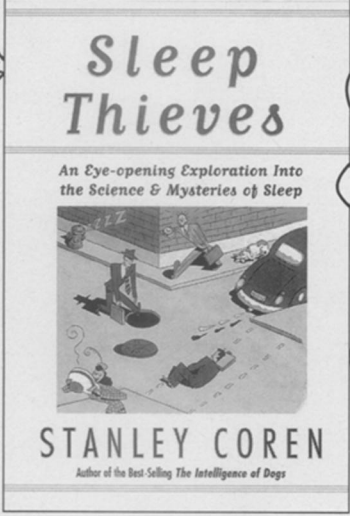
**The Logic of Failure: Why Things Go Wrong and What We Can Do to Make Them Right**—Dietrich Dörner. The winner of Germany's highest science prize presents his theories about why we make mistakes and what accounts for our failures. By studying how we fail, he is essentially looking at how we make decisions and how we need to think in order to achieve positive results. He explains that failure is caused by sloppy or ingrained mental habits that suppress our ability to take side effects and long-term repercussions into consideration. Dörner counteracts the logic of failure by using computer simulations to monitor decision-making processes and by observing case studies of poor planning. Metropolitan/Holt, 1996, 222 p., hardcover, \$25.00.

**Man and Microbes: Disease and Plagues in History and Modern Times**—Arno Karlen. Science writer Karlen recounts the history of a variety of epidemics and pandemics and explains how people and microbes adapt to each other. Armed with this understanding, he asks his audience to consider some new and some all-but-forgotten diseases and microbes, including HIV, hantavirus, and tuberculosis. Originally published in hardcover in 1995. Touchstone, 1996, 266 p., paperback, \$13.00.

**Science on Trial: The Clash of Medical Evidence and the Law in the Breast Implant Case**—Marcia Angell. The executive editor of THE NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL OF MEDICINE shows that there is no scientific evidence to date to validate the claim that silicone implants cause autoimmune or connective tissue disease. Angell illustrates how, through media manipulation and scientific ignorance within society, the claimants were able to garner a \$4.25 billion judgment without having to back up their claim sufficiently. In all, she provides a critical analysis of how the legal system and scientists for hire can be used in tandem with the media to create health scares. Norton, 1996, 256 p., hardcover, \$27.50.

**Technology and Creativity**—Subrata Dasgupta. Is the creative mind of an inventor as inherent as an artist's is believed to be? Dasgupta shows how cognitive science can shed light on the underpinnings of the technological mind and its key facets: conception, invention, and design. Through case studies of some of the most accomplished inventors of modern times he shows the ideas that preceded the first electronic computer and how the steam engine and superalloys were developed. OUP, 1996, 233, hardcover, \$25.00.

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