

upon the land expedition other than offering several inconveniences.

During the course of the winter, Back learns of the safe return of the Ross party. Now freed to follow the secondary objective of exploration, Back attempts to convey his excitement at the beginning of this trip to the Polar sea. "Before me were novelty and enterprise; hope, curiosity, and the love of adventure were my companions; and even the prospect of difficulties and dangers to be encountered, . . . instead of damping rather heightened the enjoyment of the moment."

Generally speaking the text relates more the personal sacrifice and hardships of Arctic exploration than the glory of discovery. Although presented in diary form, the reader gains a poor image of Back, the person. Back does appear,

however, as a man dedicated to a life of adventure and a man experienced in command.

The text itself is long and rather dry reading. In the Appendix are the details of discovery. Exact site locations (latitude and longitude) referred to within the text are listed, plus botanical, zoological, geological, and meteorological observations made during the course of the expedition. This book will probably not receive wide attention from the general public, but should appeal to persons interested in Canadian history and/or life in Canada's north.

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The Mighty Mackenzie, Highway to the Arctic Ocean

By Lyn Hancock. 1974. Hancock House, Saanichton, B.C. 95 pp. \$3.95.

This excellent travelogue describes the immense Mackenzie River as it flows from Wrigley Harbour on Great Slave Lake to Tuktoyaktuk on the Arctic Ocean, 1089 miles downstream. We float with the author past log cabins, Indian villages, spectacular cliffs, and vast waterfowl nesting grounds, all of which she depicts skillfully in words or in the more than 200 black-and-white photographs and pen sketches. She adds geographical and historical details when these are pertinent.

Lyn Hancock deals particularly well with environmental and social problems. At Norman Wells, where oil comes from the ground with such natural force that no pumping is necessary, she discusses with an oil man the filter ponds where oil and water leaking from the system are trapped. The oil stays on the top to be recycled back to the refinery. The oil man explains his company's policy of allowing their Indian and Eskimo employees frequent time off for hunting. Further north at Mountain River she visits a research station of various gas and oil companies. Here studies are being conducted to determine how a pipeline will affect plants and animals of the Arctic. For example a biologist is pleased to report to her that caribou have been scratching their antlers against noisy compressor pumps.

I was amazed to read of the great activity on the river itself. It is a remarkable contrast with what one finds in other parts of northern Canada.

On a recent canoe trip which I took in northern Quebec, we encountered fewer than a boat a week on the Broadback and Rupert Rivers. The Mackenzie conversely is a highway for an assortment of dredges, barges, steamboats, rafts, canoes, and kayaks. Local people are worried about the naïvety of southern adventurers who head into this wild country without adequate supplies and without a sturdy craft to carry them.

The author gives us an interesting glimpse of the birds and mammals she sees during her trip, and vivid descriptions of the native people she encounters. At the Northern Games in Inuvik she describes the bannock-making competition, the wild dances, and the muskrat-skinning contest — 35 seconds for the winners. I wish she had also described her own party, as Pierre Berton did effectively in his *Drifting Home*. One is curious to know who accompanied her on the trip, how they got along together, how many miles they motored each day in their craft, and what their menus were.

This book includes a useful appendix which lists how one can ship oneself and one's boat to the Mackenzie, where there are hotels and what they charge, and when special celebrations are held. At \$3.95 this volume is a wonderful introduction to northwest Canada.

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Dagg, A I. 1975. "The mighty Mackenzie, highway to the Arctic Ocean, by Lyn Hancock [Review]." *The Canadian field-naturalist* 89(2), 205–205.

<https://doi.org/10.5962/p.344877>.

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