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Alkaloids: Chemical and Biological Perspectives. Edited by S. William Pelletier. 398 pp. illus. John Wiley & Sons, New York, 1983. \$55.00.

The name of S. William Pelletier is well known and highly respected amongst chemists and biologists interested in alkaloids. In this welcome new volume, Pelletier edits a group of five chapters prepared by eight experts in addition to himself.

Dr. Pelletier's most original and searching introductory article discusses, with several novel suggestions, the nature and definition of an alkaloid—ending up, “after much soul searching,” that an alkaloid “is a cyclic compound containing nitrogen in a negative oxidation state which is of limited distribution among living organisms.”

Other contributions include Jones and Blum's contribution of arthropod alkaloids; Leete's consideration of biosynthesis and metabolism of the tobacco alkaloids; Benn and Jacyno's discussion of the toxicology and pharmacology of diterpenoid alkaloids; and Kisakürek, Leeuwenberg, and Hesse's survey of indole alkaloids of the Apocynaceae, Loganiaceae, and Rubiaceae.

The value of the several articles in this volume is unexcelled and attempts to put the limited alkaloidal topics considered into both chemical and biological perspectives. This orientation, often missing in purely chemical treatises on alkaloids, is sorely needed.

The superb quality of this first volume in an interdisciplinary series holds out the hope for other equally outstanding volumes soon to follow.

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The World of Bamboo. Shinji Takama. 236 pp. illus. Heian International Publishing, San Francisco, 1983. \$75.00.

To describe this photographic study of bamboo as a magnificent production would be the height of understatement. It is a rare combination of art and science. Its 159 superb color photographs that make up the major portion of the book are divided into several groups: 1) In praise of bamboo; 2) In bamboo groves; 3) The many aspects of bamboo; 4) Living with bamboo. This pictorial study is followed by six sections illustrated with black and white photographs: 1) Types of (bamboo) weaving; 2) Types of bamboo fencing; 3) Types of bamboo enclosures; 4) Detached fences and gates; 5) Ways of structuring bamboo fences; 6) Varieties of bamboo forms and leaves. Of very special scientific interest is the final section of 47 color photographs entitled Varieties of bamboo, written by Prof. Koichiro Ueda and offering the Japanese name and a brief description of the varieties. The final photographic portion of the volume comprises 159 small black and white photographs arranged in five groups: 1) In praise of bamboo; 2) In bamboo groves; 3) The many aspects of bamboo; 4) Living with bamboo; 5) Bamboo shoots and crafts. These illustrative sections are followed by one full page of Japanese and scientific terms of bamboo.

Shinji Takama comes from a family of three generations of photographers. His own unexcelled skill with the camera is crowned by his obvious love of bamboo. “I have devoted myself to the photography of bamboo,” he writes, “for some thirty years—and never have I tired of the subject. Having grown up in a little village surrounded by bamboo, I played in bamboo groves, rode bamboo hobbyhorses, flew bamboo dragon flies—indeed, my entire life has been intertwined with bamboo.” Throughout the book, he captures and expresses that very special love of bamboo that permeates Japan's culture and, as the Japanese writer Tsutomu Minakami states in his introduction to the book: “Mr. Takama has exposed and expressed most eloquently the true spirit of bamboo.”

This volume is most superbly published—an excellence befitting the skill of Takama's photography. The publishers are to be commended for such an outstanding production, a

contribution to art and to economic botany that will long be treasured by many who are fortunate enough to see and use it.

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Tropical Nature. Adrian Forsythe and Kenneth Miyata. 248 pp. illus. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1984. \$16.95.

The authors describe for a non-technical but dedicated audience many facets of life and death in the rain forests of tropical America, especially of Costa Rica and Peru. They maintain and prove with many examples how superficial and preliminary is our scientific understanding of scores of the major biological enigmas of this type of ecosystem. They furthermore argue convincingly that conservation of these forests will depend ultimately on the presentation of convincing proof that conservation is an economic plus.

The book, written in an entertaining yet educative manner, is divided into 17 chapters with an introduction entitled "A temperate view of tropical life," an appendix called "Tropical travel—a beginner's guide," and suggestions for further reading arranged in distinct categories: general, field guides, and lists of books and articles chapter by chapter. The suggested readings are a careful mixture of popular and scientific sources, all, incidentally, well chosen and reliable. Especially forceful is chapter 17 entitled "Paradise Lost?" in which the authors wisely write: "The best that we can hope for is what we ourselves have settled for—a strong system of national parks and reserves and perhaps a modicum of care and concern for those areas where development must proceed."

As an explorer with long experience in tropical American rain forests, I can strongly recommend this book as a well balanced, straightforward presentation of the present status of our jungles and fascinating discussions of their biological curiosities—all presented in a convincingly authoritative style.

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Bibliography on Bean Research in Africa. Jorge López S. 177 pp. Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical, Cali, Colombia, 1983. Price not given.

Several decades of work on beans, primarily *Phaseolus vulgaris*, in the entire African continent are covered. All aspects of bean production, disease, fertilization, nodulation, cropping strategies, and the like are included. Entries are organized by country and author, many accompanied by abstracts. The book includes guides to abbreviations and acronyms, and author and subject indices.

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