Some glimpses into parts of a vanishing world

What do the pronghorn, bongo, gerenuk, drill, addax, manatee, and mouflon have in common? They are all endangered animals and will eventually become extinct if their situation is not improved.

Dave Taylor's Endangered Animal Series from Crabtree Publishing looks at animals living in eight areas: islands, wetlands, oceans, deserts, forests, savannahs, mountains, and grasslands.

In Endangered Forest Animals, for example, the drill of central Africa, a close relative of the mandrill, is suffering because its forest home is being destroyed. In the Caribbean Sea, the pollution of coastal waters is gravely affecting the manatee, a slow-moving animal that is often cut up by the propellers of motorboats (Endangered Ocean Animals).

The mouflon, the only wild sheep in Europe, is now protected by law, but at one time was hunted almost to the point of extinction (Endangered Island Animals). In North America during the 1800s, 50 million pronghorns grazed in the grasslands, but the settlers began farming the land and killing the animals for food and their skins. They too are now protected by conservation laws, although their habitats continue to disappear with land development (Endangered Grassland Animals).

Humans play a major role in this ongoing destruction of animal species. Hopefully, we can improve their chances of survival through our growing awareness of the importance of conservation.

These 32-page books (\$9.95 paperback, \$20.95 hardcover) are enhanced by the hundreds of beautiful colour photographs taken by the author, who is a well-known wildlife photographer.

On the same theme is the Wildside Series available through McClelland & Stewart. These books, suitable for 8-12 year olds, consider both animals and plants and suggest ways we can contribute towards their conservation. In Wildside on Rainforests B author Paul Appleby encourages us to eat less chocolate, because in eastern Brazil, 96.5 per cent of the rainforest has been destroyed in order to provide land for growing sugar and cocoa to meet our demand for these products.

"Adopt a log," says Tess Lemmon in Wildside on Woodlands. We humans like to make our surroundings "neat and tidy," continues Lemmon, to the detriment of plants and animals that may depend on a fallen log for food and a home. Fungus, moss, snakes, salamanders, mice and thousands of insects like nothing better, says Lemmon, than a mouldy log.

In this series, you will also find Wildside on Oceans by Nick Davies and Susan McMilan's Wildside on Rivers, Lakes and Wetlands. Full-colour photographs and illustrations abound in these books. Each 64-page, hardcover volume costs \$14.99.

And finally, for the younger crowd (4-7 year olds), are two 22-page picture books in Scholastic's Vanishing Animal Series (\$4.95 paperback each).

Olena Kassian's text and Lydia Bailey's watercolour illustrations introduce children to the desert pupfish, now stranded in small pools in the middle of the desert (Vanishing Animals of the Water) and the nocturnal ayeaye that uses its amazingly long middle finger to dig out delectable, juicy insects from tree holes (Vanishing Animals of the Jungle and Forest).

"Each one is very special," says Bailey, "and deserves a chance to live."



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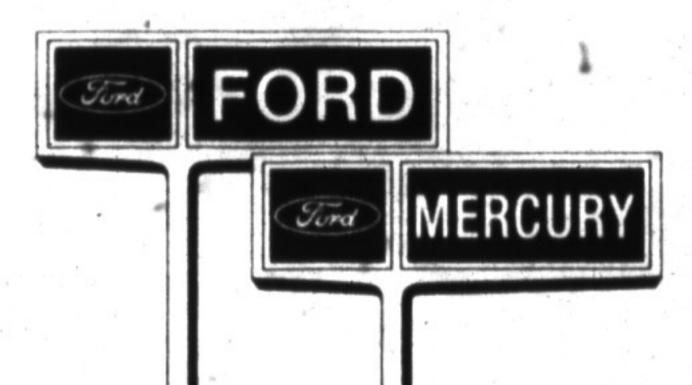
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