

Diary of a Lake: An Intimate Description of the Natural History of Glacier Lake and the Cirque of the Unclimbables, in the Words of Scientists Who Were Among the.

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 **Diary of a Lake: An Intimate Description of the Natural History of Glacier Lake and the Cirque of the Unclimbables, in the Words of Scientists Who Were Among the Area's First Pioneers (review)**

Laura Cameron

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REVIEW

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

Reviewed by

Laura Cameron

Diary of a Lake: An Intimate Description of the Natural History of Glacier Lake and the Cirque of the Unclimbables, in the Words of Scientists Who Were among the Area's First Pioneers.
Edited by John Harris and Vivien Lougheed. Prince George, BC: Repository Press, 2002. Pp. 214, illus. \$22.00

Travel and fieldwork have long held key roles in the making of knowledge in the natural sciences. Although Glacier Lake 'in the geographical heart of the NWT's Mackenzie Mountains' has been a magnet for canoeists and climbers for decades, it has a longer history as a mecca for scientists. In *Diary of a Lake*, John Harris and Vivien Lougheed assemble historic documents, interviews, and obituaries of the key people who first constituted this scientific field-site. If not a critical cultural history of science, this is a layered, carefully edited, and accessible guidebook to the area, steeped in fascinating and revealing accounts of scientific fieldwork from the 1930s to the 1950s.

Significant characters in this story include Hugh Miller Raup (1901-95), a Harvard naturalist with expertise in botany, ecology, and geography, Howard Frederick Lambart (1880-1946), geographer and topographical surveyor with the Dominion Government, and Colonel Harry Michener Snyder (1883-1972), a wealthy businessman, big-game hunter, and like Lambart, a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. The foreword is a delightful account of fieldwork written from childhood memory by Raup's son, David (a distinguished paleontologist) who, in 1939 at the age of six, journeyed with his family to help - in his way - conduct the first botanical survey of the Glacier Lake area. Hugh Raup was also aided by his wife Lucy, a lichenologist (but not professionally recognized as such) and field assistant James Soper, who would later become chief botanist at the Canadian Museum of Nature. In the 'Documents' section of the book, the editors include recipes from Lucy's 1967 *Camper's Cookbook* as well as excerpts from Hugh's and James's personal field diaries. These diary

entries are juxtaposed, potentially reminding the reader not only of gaps and absences in the text but of how fieldwork also entailed creating professional identity and equipping the self.

Harris introduces this material with an essay on scientific exploration in the area, steering a path between celebratory accounts of 'pioneers' and critical assessments of intentions and outcomes. Constructions of the 'field' are not addressed explicitly by gender, empire, or nationalism. However, Harris points to significant detail in the selected documents that might otherwise escape notice, such as the Cold War investigations of the fifties in which botanical survey was only one line of enquiry next to uranium exploration, the examination of terrain conditions, and air photos to advise on the movement of troops through subarctic areas like **[End Page 827]** Kamchatka, and the testing of survival equipment for the Pentagon. He also notes fictional elaborations in travel accounts (such as Norman Thomas's addition of a grizzly encounter), which might lead one to wonder about the extent to which conventions of scientific heroism shaped field reports. In *Diary of a Lake*, brave adventurers and objective scientists emerge as the same men: Risky encounters with grizzlies and wild rivers act to warrant genuine knowledge of nature.

Above all, Harris asks some good questions. Were Snyder (and mammalogist George Gilbert Goodwin) the first people to visit the lake? Although Harris notes they assumed they were and fellow scientists found no evidence of Aboriginal occupation, he states, 'It should be remembered, though, that neither party was actually looking for such evidence, and no archeologists were present.' Harris also wonders about the real motives of Snyder, whose financial backing and support was critical to the scientific investigations of this period. Some say that in mounting his expeditions, Snyder was 'using' the scientists in order to get permits from the NWT Council to shoot big game. Snyder, author of *Snyder's Book of Big Game Hunting*, killed the world's record elephant in Kenya, and his Alberta ranch was decorated with 'trophies' from around the world. David Raup's defence of Snyder points to the ways in which lake studies may connect with power and...

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