

**MAMMALS OF UNGAVA AND LABRADOR: THE 1882–1884 FIELDNOTES OF LUCIEN M. TURNER TOGETHER WITH INUIT AND INNU KNOWLEDGE.** Scott A. Heyes and Kristopher M. Helgen (editors). 2014. Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press. lii +384p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 978-1-935623-21-2. US\$ 49.95, C\$57.

Lucien McShan Turner (1847–1909) was a scientist, who had much experience in Alaska, and who was dispatched by the Smithsonian Institution in 1882 to Fort Chimo (now Kuujuaq) in Ungava (northern Quebec and Labrador) to act as meteorological recorder for an expedition associated with the then International Polar Year. But it appears from the records set out in this book that he may have had as much, or even more, interest in the natural history and ethnography of the region as in the possibly rather dull, recording of temperatures, precipitation etc. He made copious observations of animals and people and indeed it is remarkable how much work he accomplished in a relatively short period. His book on the ethnography of the Inuit and Innu, inhabitants in the area, was published in 1894 but his notes on the mammals, including much information derived from the local peoples, have remained unpublished until this volume.

When one picks up a book for review one knows within a very short time whether it is going to be a pleasurable task or whether one is going to have to grit teeth in order to get to the end. Fortunately, as this is a very bulky book, first impressions place it squarely in the former category. Handsomely, indeed faultlessly, presented, solidly bound, magnificently illustrated ... these facts are immediately apparent. Its defects only become revealed after longer scrutiny.

There is a comprehensive introduction to Turner's work in Ungava but a large number of points one might wish to know about Turner, himself, go unanswered, details concerning his education for example, and about his family history; professions of his parents etc. It is stated that he was married, with two children, at the time of the start of the expedition but that he was divorced during it, rather unusual at the time, and the grounds are not indicated although Turner's frequent absences seem to have contributed to the split. Otherwise there is relatively little to enable us to get beneath the skin of the man. Indeed from the portraits of him presented in the book he appears a somewhat bland individual, looking rather like a country accountant for example, and not at all a seeker after the unknown, which is certainly what he was.

It should be stated that the preliminary material in the book is rather long, too long, at no fewer than 52 pages. We have an 'Elder dedication', then contents, a comprehensive list of illustrations, a list of mammal stories, which reveals that several of those printed were not collected by Turner himself, but very recently, by one of the Editors, thereby revealing that the presentation of Inuit and Innu knowledge up to the present might have been an aim of the Editors distracting somewhat from concentration on the work of Turner himself. These inclusions disturb the focus throughout and are one of the defects of the book. But that is not all of the introductory material. There is an Editors' preface followed by long acknowledgements and a Foreword by Tim Flannery who is, we are informed, 'Scientist,

author and the 2007 Australian of the Year'. The relevance of this last observation rather escapes me. Then there is an essay entitled 'An Appreciation of "Something fiercely desirable"' by Stephen Loring, of the Smithsonian followed by 'Editors' reflections' on 'Two extraordinary years'. Then we come, with some relief, to the 'legend' setting out the scheme under which Turner's fieldnotes are organised for presentation in the book, and very comprehensive and impressive it is. But just when one imagines that one is actually going to start reading Turner's own work, one is held up with 'A Turner family tribute' by his grandson, which is in some senses rather more revealing than much of the material that has gone before. One does not wish to appear ungracious but it is obvious that this should have appeared adjacent to the 'Elder dedication' at the start. This reviewer is insufficiently courageous to speculate concerning which should have appeared first. To sum up it is abundantly evident that, thus far, the whole work would have benefited from some tough editing.

But when we arrive at 'L.M. Turner's introduction, 1886' one is with Turner himself, written in excellent, grammatical, precise, prose, unlike some of what has gone before. Every sentence is a pleasure to read. He starts with the letter with which he sent, to the Chief Signal Officer of the US Army, because his formal employment was as an enlisted man in that force, the results of his work. The first paragraph is a model of what such writing should be. He reminds that officer that in his leisure time:

from the arduous duties pertaining to the official work connected with meteorology, I was to devote myself to securing all other objects which would serve to elucidate the history of that region. Much attention was given to the study of the *faunae* and to the collection of ethnological material and a comprehensive vocabulary of the language spoken by the natives. To the study of linguistics I devoted the long winter evenings ...

Note the use of the nominative plural of *fauna*. Turner was certainly a highly educated man. Moreover: 'I have endeavored to leave out all discussion and confine myself to actual field observation and ... have used the personal pronoun I as a warrant of individual responsibility for all assertions made by myself.'

Then we are presented with Turner's narrative of the expedition itself. Much of this is his journey to Fort Chimo that was largely made courtesy of the Hudson Bay Company, and is a lively, straightforward account of what was, even in 1882, a fairly perilous voyage. There is a simply magnificent map of the route revealing that the Smithsonian Institution has not stinted itself in its desire for quality. At all events, *Labrador* went aground on a reef in lower Ungava Bay on 5 August but fortunately was floated off undamaged. The rest of this introduction is a comprehensive account of the yearly cycle of activities, notably hunting, undertaken by the inhabitants of the Fort Chimo area.

The core of the book is thus reached. Turner starts with the cetaceans his accounts of which are 'fascinating' according to the Editors and one certainly cannot argue with that. He gives detailed descriptions of three species, beluga (*Dolfinapterus leucas*), narwhal (*Monodon monoceros*) and bowhead (*Balaena*

*mysticetus*) but notes that other species, while present, were seen 'under such conditions that would render their identification purely conjecture.' This must be guidance for all field naturalists. The section on beluga comprises 14 packed pages and includes Turner's carefully written observations, Inuit stories, 'Beluga ethnography', and comprehensive illustrations including one of a male foetus. We also have two further stories collected by one of the Editors and, as implied above, this reviewer does not see the relevance of this if the focus of the book is Turner and the information he gathered personally or from the Inuit and Innu whom *he* consulted concerning the animals in question.

Then we proceed to the ungulates, in which appears the longest and most detailed section in the book. This is on the woodland caribou or reindeer (*Rangifer tarandus*). Then onto rodents, lagomorphs, insectivorous mammals, and carnivores. One does not have to be a zoologist to stand in awe of what Turner was able to achieve. His writing is always excellent and the specimens that he accumulated, many of which are illustrated, bear testimony to the quality of his work as a field scientist.

In general the illustrations, both photographs and sketches are very well chosen and lavishly provided but there is one caveat. Each animal has a black and white drawing by an artist specially charged with the task and while most are acceptable some are most certainly not. The black bear, which appears twice, on pages 190 and 257, is much more wooden than any bear this reviewer has ever seen. But the picture of a caribou on the dust jacket and on page xxx is simply stunning. But even though it appears directly under the name of the artist specially employed, it is not her work. This is rather misleading. It is by E.T. Seton in 1898 who prepared figures for Turner's manuscript but these have, most unfortunately, been lost. This is a real tragedy since it is obvious that an original series by him would greatly enhance the value of the present work.

To sum up: a very good book and one that sets out the work of a very little known naturalist, linguist and ethnographer in a comprehensive and attractive way. All with Arctic interests should read it. They are sure to learn something new. (Ian R. Stone, Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge University, Lensfield Rd, Cambridge CB2 1ER ([irs30@cam.ac.uk](mailto:irs30@cam.ac.uk))).