

(Download free pdf) In a Desert Garden: Love and Death Among the Insects

In a Desert Garden: Love and Death Among the Insects

John Alcock

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John Alcock : In a Desert Garden: Love and Death Among the Insects before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised In a Desert Garden: Love and Death Among the Insects:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Timothy Eric Robinson Great book if you're interested in insects. Well written and full of interesting facts. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. So many great memories 'lmost alive again By Ol' Doc If you've ever been to the Sonoran Desert how can you not love Alcock's book! ? 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating Bugs By Customer An interesting read for those intrigued by nature. Gardeners in desert areas will find it full of knowledge of what they see around them in the way of insects. The author's writing style is entertaining and humorous.

John Alcock, a specialist in the ecology of the American Southwest, introduces us to the lives loves of desert insects as they forage through his backyard oasis. Creating his own desert garden behind his suburban home in Tempe, Arizona, Alcock scrutinizes every square inch of soil -- detailing the exotic plant life he finds, offering tips on its peccadilloes preservation. Alcock pieces together the entire ecosystem of his desert paradise. This is an elegant combination of meticulous science nature reverie that draws its reader into the diverse, competitive, even seductive world of desert plants insects. Color photos drawings.

From Library Journal Alcock (zoology, Arizona State Univ.) has written yet another book dealing with his specialty: desert ecology in the American Southwest. His previous works include *The Masked Bobwhite Rides Again* (LJ

9/1/93) and *Sonoran Desert Summer* (LJ 3/15/90). The focus of his new work is the author's own front yard in Tempe, Arizona, and its insect inhabitants. Several years ago, Alcock tore out his typical suburban lawn to re-create a miniature native desert habitat, complete with representative local desert vegetation. He also added a small vegetable garden on one side. Readers will gain insights into how science is practiced as the author's lively, often humorous observations of assorted beetles, bugs, wasps, bees, caterpillars, and butterflies are related to broad concepts of animal behavior, ecology, and survival. Alcock's considerable talent as a nature writer is demonstrated here by his ability to take a subject as seemingly mundane as the insects found in the yard and turn it into a fascinating learning adventure. Recommended for public and academic libraries. William H. Wiese, Iowa State Univ. Lib., Ames Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist

Biologist Alcock calls Arizona home, and that is where he tends a desert garden that provides a working laboratory for observing and appreciating insect behavior. Alcock's limitless curiosity about all manner of bugs propels his latest book--beginning with the story of how he converted an unappealing front lawn area into a minidesert environment. Although Alcock makes no bones about mosquitoes that cause malaria and other dreaded pests that color the way most of us see insects, he nevertheless has written an ode celebrating those small creatures. Whether commenting on the fascinating mating rituals of various mantids, spiders, and beetles, or wondering at the camouflagic accomplishments of grasshoppers, butterfly larvae, and caterpillars, Alcock writes with a wry humor that appears as well in reflections on growing vegetables and cultivating compost. Graced with lively line drawings and color photographs, Alcock's engaging, illuminating text offers delightful reading for all who appreciate the natural world. Alice Joyce From Kirkus sA spirited primer in Sonoran Desert ecology, cloaked in a memoir of gardening. To judge by this graceful little study of insects and desert plants, Alcock (*The Masked Bobwhite Rides Again*, 1993), a zoologist at Arizona State University, is a suburban neighbor's nightmare. First, he replaced his Bermuda-grass lawn with gravel, cacti, and succulents to replicate the look of the desert before humans remade it. Next, he festooned his yard with cowpies carefully selected for size, weight, and dryness, "the crme de la crme of termite chow, as far as Gnathamitermes are concerned," whereafter that voracious insect would find hospitable quarters in his domain. Then he seeded his property with flowers to attract a flotilla of winged and crawling creatures, "carpenter bees and globe mallow bees, brittlebush aphids and milkweed aphids, these and many other insects." Thus equipped with a back-door laboratory for ecological studies, Alcock spent the next few years observing what happened; his observations provided him with the field notes from which this book is made. Alcock fills his pages with asides on the insects he has studied for so long at close hand. We learn, among other things, that female praying mantises have gotten a bad rap as spousal murderers; rising to their defense, he observes that "the extent of female consumption of males during copulation had been greatly exaggerated." We learn as well that aphids are to be prized, the occasional loss of a rosebush or milkweed plant aside, for their marvelous properties: They reproduce "without the curious beings we call males" and otherwise develop and mutate in unexpected ways. Ever original, Alcock encourages readers to view the desert with new eyes through this fine contribution to arid-lands literature. -- Copyright 1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.