

Life above the Jungle Floor: A Biologist Explores a Strange and Hidden Tree-top World, by Donald Perry. Simon and Schuster, New York. 170 pp. (1986) \$16.95.

My first impression when I began reading this book was that it was a travelogue, not a treatise on the rain forest canopy. Having spent 15 years in the rain forests of Malaya and Thailand, 5 of these making observations from my own 140-ft high platform in the forest above Kuala Lumpur, I was looking forward to descriptions of the fauna and flora of the Costa Rican site with charts, graphs, tables and illustrations. The author's article in the November 1984 issue of *Scientific American* had prepared me for this. Instead, this is a very readable book in which Perry presents his experiences in the forest crown and his efforts to learn more about the ecosystem. He discusses the plants and animals that he meets and weaves them into the complex patterns of the canopy. The discourse is rambling and the topics do not follow chapter headings very closely. It is his diversion by the things that he sees and the accounts of the lives and modifications of the plants and animals that lend charm to the book. In describing the canopy life he discusses current theories and thoughts relative to evolution, protective mimicry, extinction, species divergence, symbiosis, etc., presenting his own views which in many cases are not in agreement with the established ones. This may bring criticism from readers who are in disagreement with him. I get the impression that here is a book written by an "angry young man" who loves tropical rain forests the same as I do and who is aghast at their destruction and grieved by the loss of knowledge and biotic potential accompanying this destruction. He weaves the wonderful pattern of canopy life and cries out that it be spared.

I suspect that the author felt that a more detailed presentation should be left to the scientific journals, for he does not present the data that you know he must have. The brief bibliography is entirely inadequate. But if you want to get a feeling for the immensity, complexity and wonder of forest life this is a book to have.

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