

Book Reviews

ANGLES ON FISHING, by Alexander Schwab (E. Z & D Verlag, 2010; marketed in the UK by Merlin Unwin Books at £99.00, ISBN: 978-3-033-02412-0)

Angles on Fishing is Alexander Schwab's third book on the philosophy and ethics of angling and his best yet. While I found the first two, *Hook, Line and Thinker*, and *Dear Jim: Reflections on the Beauty of Angling*, somewhat uninspiring, they were well received by other reviewers. Whether or not books of this sort appeal to the individual is very much a matter of personal taste.

As the author says in his Preface, *Angles on Fishing* is about the 'more' in the motto of The Flyfishers' Club, that 'there is more to fishing than catching fish'. Schwab sees that 'more' as including the pleasure fishing gives, and such things as the art, music, humour, beauty and even the beer associated with it, and – above all – the ethics of the sport. He covers that ground coherently, comprehensively, intelligently and wittily. In particular, he lays waste to the fallacious arguments deployed against angling by 'animal rights' lobbyists and some environmentalists while, at the same time, noting their success in having their views taken increasingly seriously by legislative bodies. He sounds repeated and sensible notes of caution against complacency. He is well qualified to undertake so analytical a task, and to do so in English, because, although he was brought up in Switzerland, he has a Master's Degree in Philosophy from Aberdeen University.

Schwab's two previous books were not greatly enhanced by their illustrations – good photographs rendered in monochrome when they would have been more engaging had they been in colour. This one is different. It is illustrated throughout with a profusion of fascinating and well reproduced images.

Where I have a real difficulty with *Angles on Fishing*, though, is with the £99 price tag. No doubt the author and publishers would seek to justify it by pointing out that it is in a limited edition of 333, all signed by the author. I am not convinced that that is reasonable. Presentationally, it seems to be a compromise between a 'coffee table book' on the one hand and an interesting and amusing read on the other, filling neither role particularly comfortably. That is a pity, because I think Schwab's text is well worth reading, and I suspect that it would reach a wider readership if the presentation and pricing were a little less pretentious.

Incidentally, a boxed edition, limited to just 12 signed copies, bound in dark blue leather and embellished with perch skin is available for £395.

P.M.L.

BLOOD KNOTS, by Luke Jennings (Atlantic Books, 2010; paperback, £12.99; ISBN 978 1 84887 368)

Luke Jennings's angling memoir, *Blood Knots*, is amongst the most fascinating and engaging books I have read. Indeed, I could well be tempted to put it right at the top of the list. That is quite a statement, and I have thought very