individual topics included within each section are not covered completely or are absent.

The *Handbook of Human Toxicology* is divided into 5 sections: metal toxicology, nutrition and toxicology, inhalation toxicology, immunotoxicology, and reproductive and developmental toxicology. Each section reviews 4 to 6 topics. The fields of toxicology and wilderness medicine have a limited area of overlap. This overlap may occur with the potential for exposure to toxic substances from open water sources with industrial or chemical contamination and food storage wastage. The specific topics included in the *Handbook of Human Toxicology* that may be of benefit to those active in the field of wilderness medicine are metal toxicology, naturally occurring dietary carcinogens and toxins, and the effects of pesticides (although limited to the effects on the immune system). Overall, the book has a limited application to those in the field of wilderness medicine without a keen special interest in the discipline of environmental toxicology.

James A. Litch, MD, DTMH
Kathmandu, Nepal

The High Altitude Medicine Handbook, 2nd edition

Andrew J. Pollard and David R. Murdoch
Abingdon, Oxon, UK: Radcliffe Medical Press, 1998
US \$26.50, £17.95, 272 pages, softcover.

The High Altitude Medicine Handbook fills the need for an easy-to-read, concise, clinically relevant handbook for anyone advising high-altitude travelers or venturing to serve as clinicians in high-altitude settings. The scope of the book extends beyond high-altitude medicine to include related topics in expedition medicine, such as cold- and heat-related conditions, travel-related diseases and vaccines, water disinfection, and prevention and management of illness and injury in the mountains. This second edition has been revised to include the latest information and more extensive listings of source material.

The High Altitude Medicine Handbook serves as an excellent practical overview. The material is well organized, clearly written, and to the point. Liberal use of headings allows easy access for quick reference on a particular topic. The essential information over a broad selection of topics is offered, rather than comprehensive coverage in fine detail. As the book title states, this is a handbook, not a textbook, and as such lends considerable clinical value.

For medical practitioners, the book has a place in the clinic for reference when advice is requested by patients considering travel to high altitude, although it may best serve as a critical review for those preparing to serve as

medical officers on an expedition. Climbers and trekkers will find the material useful and understandable.

James A. Litch, MD, DTMH
Kathmandu, Nepal

Canyoneering: Beginning to Advanced Techniques

Christopher Van Tilburg
Seattle, WA: The Mountaineers, 2000
US \$18.95, 156 pages, softcover.

Growing up in the American desert southwest, I spent many weekends and school holidays exploring nearby canyons. My friends and I would park at the head of a canyon and start working our way downstream, usually climbing to the rim at some point and making our way back. We would throw or lower our packs into pools and scramble or rappel down to join them. We'd climb rock walls and clamber over boulders, often crossing the stream multiple times to find our way out of the canyon. (Luckily, we always found at least one way out!) These multiday trips are some of my most cherished memories, and traveling through these unique canyons is still one of my favorite activities.

I didn't know it at the time, but we weren't just hiking, but actually *Canyoneering*! Christopher Van Tilburg's new book introduces his readers to this emerging sport and attempts to cover some of the technical and philosophical aspects.

Upon picking up the book, I noticed first the back cover, which reads like advertising copy for the latest reality TV series: "ALL THE SKILLS FOR ALL THE THRILLS! Canyoneering is the ultimate challenge—and here's the most comprehensive guide available to all the skills you need to excel in this cutting-edge sport. . . . HIKE deep canyons and gorges, CLIMB tall rock walls and rappel into caverns, SWIM through plunge pools, NAVIGATE winding rock mazes." (Caps not mine.) Fortunately, the rest of the book is less overhyped, quite engaging, and very informative.

The book touches on gear selection, weather, route-finding, rudimentary first aid, swimming, bouldering, and rappelling. It finishes with sections on canyon biking and paddling, and provides a sound introduction to each of its subjects. Sprinkled throughout the book are personal vignettes designed to spark an interest in canyoneering.

As with most types of wilderness travel, canyoneering cannot be learned from a book, but requires active participation. It is an activity best learned with more experienced companions over multiple trips. The author several times advocates taking classes to gain experi-