



# The Real Thing: The Natural History of Ian McTaggart Cowan

*Briony Penn*

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## The Real Thing: The Natural History of Ian McTaggart Cowan Briony Penn

*The Real Thing* is the first official biography of Ian McTaggart Cowan (1910–2010), the “father of Canadian ecology.” Authorized by his family and with the research support and participation of the University of Victoria Libraries, Briony Penn provides an unprecedented and accessible window into the story of this remarkable naturalist. From his formative years roaming the mountains around Vancouver looking for venison to his last years finishing the voluminous and authoritative *Birds of British Columbia*, Cowan’s life provides a unique perspective on a century of environmental change—with a critical message for the future.

As the head and founder of the first university-based wildlife department in Canada, Ian McTaggart Cowan revolutionized the way North Americans understood the natural world, and students flocked into his classrooms to hear his brilliant, entertaining lectures regarding the new science of ecology. His television programs in the 1950s and '60s, *Fur and Feathers*, *The Web of Life* and *The Living Sea*, made him a household name around the world. He was also responsible for hiring a young David Suzuki, who followed in his nature-show-host footsteps.

Illustrated throughout with colour and black-and-white photos from all aspects of Cowan’s life, *The Real Thing* takes the reader on an adventurous and inspirational journey through the heart of North American ecology, wilderness, landscape and wonder.



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