The Mono project is an open source implementation of the groundbreaking Microsoft .NET platform, backed by Novell and supported by thousands of contributors from around the world. Practical Mono offers readers a detailed examination of Mono and its many facets, such as building GUI-based applications with Gtk, database interaction ADO.NET, and creating powerful applications with XML and Web Services.

By embracing this implementation, users are able to take advantage of the powerful development paradigm, building Internet-enabled cross-platform applications based on freely available, open source technologies. It includes a briefing on the C language, so even novice .NET programmers stand to gain plenty from this practical guide.

My Personal Review:
At first glance, you would think that Practical Mono is yet another introductory book about C and Mono, but all of that drastically changes the moment you look at the books table of contents and see the variety of topics it covers and the lengths to which the author goes to describe the more important details.

The book gently eases the into what .NET and Mono are giving a historical background for each. What I found very interesting is the fact the author takes time to explain about .NET in the real world,
and ties this to Mono to give the reader a clear idea of how any why Mono was started and what the reader can do to participate in this effort.

Since a lot of people using Mono might be coming from a traditional .NET environment, the author expects those people to be used to certain development tools. To that effect, the second chapter in the book is dedicated to introducing the reader to development tools that can be used with Mono, especially Mono Develop. This gives the reader some heads up about what can be used instead of their conventional development tools and makes sure you start off on solid grounds.

Having gotten the user all set up and ready for action, the book then moves on to introduce the reader to C. This is a subtle introduction that eases the user into what C is and how the language works.

Chapter 3 comes in very handy when you want to brush up on your C skills or are new to C. The author continues to give the reader more information about C in a more detailed fashion in Chapter 4, Learning C: Beyond the Basics. This chapter goes into some nitty-gritty detail about C classes, exceptions, and all round more advanced C topics.

Chapter 5 moves into the more exotic areas of .NET that deal with the CLR, IL, assemblies, and the general assembly cache (GAC). This chapter is very helpful if the reader wishes to acquire in depth info of how the .NET environment works. Other discussed topics here are garbage collection, application domains, and the class library. This is one of those chapters that make this book an excellent
recommendation for both novice and advanced users of C and .NET. The first 5 chapters have made sure the user is very knowledgeable about what Mono is, what .NET is, what C is, and how all of them relate to each other. They have also explained C and introduced the reader to its syntax and advanced features. Starting with Chapter 6, the Practical bit from the books title starts to kick in quite strongly. If its a book with both theoretical and real world information that you want, then the coming chapters are really going to quench your thirst.

Chapter 6 goes right into the heart of on of .NETs most desired features, Windows Forms. The author explains what Windows Forms is, what GDI+ is, how to implement a good user interface, and gives real world examples of how to do all of that introducing the reader to Windows Forms various controls. A nice section that is mentioned in several chapters is the Whats New in Version 2.0? section that informs the reader about what to expect in the new version of .NET in regard to that particular topic.

Because the author knows that not all people will be using Windows Forms to design their graphical interfaces, he goes into GTK+ and Glade and takes up a complete chapter explaining what they are and how they can be used instead of Windows Forms. Chapter 7 serves as a gentle introduction to the GTK+ and Glade world, and makes sure the uses knows how to pick between Windows Forms and the GTK+ / Glade combination.
After finishing Chapter 7, the user has a very good idea about how to design a complete graphical user interface using freely available tools (Windows Forms in Mono, and GTK+ / Glade using GTK in Mono). The author now moves on to describe ADO.NET, a heavily used feature of .NET which is also available through Mono. This chapters enlightens the reader and explains all aspects of using ADO.NET in applications to connect and utilize databases. The particular example is geared towards installing MySQL. Explanation is given both for Linux and Windows, which also shows that Mono can be used as a .NET alternative on Windows.

Since XML is constantly referred to as a hot topic, the author does not let us down and dedicates a complete chapter to discussing XML and Mono. If the reader is new to XML, then he / she will be pleased to find out that an explanation to what XML is and its history is given at the beginning of Chapter 9: Using XML. The chapter deals with looking at XML documents and traversing them. The author shows us a real world example by applying this knowledge to create an RSS feed class library.

Chapter 10 is for those of us with enthusiasm for networking and remoting. This chapter, Introducing Networking and Remoting, starts by explaining what networks are and their general concepts, then dives into how we can do networking related programming in .NET. We apply this knowledge later on and create an RSS feed handler.

Another heavily used feature in .NET is ASP.NET. Chapter 11: Using ASP.NET, explains what ASP.NET is, how it works internally, and how to
use it. This chapter shows the reader how to set up a web server for
ASP.NET (both the XSP web server and an external web server) and
moves
on to show the user how a web service can be written. A lot of readers
will find this chapter very useful as web services seem to be an
increasing and expanding field right now.
Finally in Chapter 12: Using Advanced Mono Techniques, the author
dives into such topics like performance tuning, reflection, and using
threads. Advanced readers will particularly like this chapter as it
handles some of the harder more demanding features of .NET.
This book not only serves as a great learning experience that shows
you how things are done in the real world, it also as a general good
reference for C, .NET, and Mono and several of their features.
Definitely one you should have in your bookshelf right by your work
desk.
I enjoyed reading Marks book, and I would recommend it to
people that are either getting into .NET / Mono or have some
experience but would like to further it.

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