


2000

Book Review: An Illustrated Guide to Iowa Prairie Plants

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Recommended Citation

Weihe, Paul (2000) "Book Review: An Illustrated Guide to Iowa Prairie Plants," *The Journal of the Iowa Academy of Science: JIAS*: Vol. 107: No. 1 , Article 9.

Available at: <http://scholarworks.uni.edu/jias/vol107/iss1/9>

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cludes abundant references to more detailed studies, and is suitable for use as a text book or a general reference book. It also provides a wealth of information about many aspects of the natural history of the state, and best of all it provides a lot of enjoyable reading.—RAYMOND R. ANDERSON, *Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Iowa Geological Survey Bureau, Iowa City, IA. 52242.*

Wildflowers and Other Plants of Iowa Wetlands. Sylvan T. Runkel and Dean M. Roosa. 1999. Iowa State University Press. 372 pages. ISBN 0-8138-2174-6 pbk. \$24.95.

Runkel and Roosa have scored again with an impressive book on the plants of Iowa wetlands. The format is similar to their very successful *Wildflowers of the Tallgrass Prairie* (ISU Press, 1989) with full-page color illustrations of each species with the facing page giving nomenclatural data, range and habitat, leaf, flower and fruit characteristics. Information and interesting facts about the plant, including uses by aborigines and early settlers, follows.

The coverage is extensive with photos and descriptions of 150 species with 210 taxa listed in the index. The book is divided into sections on terrestrial flowering herbs (2/3 of the species), ferns and lower vascular plants, trees, shrubs, and vines, and emergent herbs.

Photography is impressive throughout the book. Each species illustrated is readily identified from its photograph. The range of species is very wide including several very rare plants, yet most of the common species are also included. Especially impressive is the section on sedges. Often this difficult group is ignored or given short shrift. Runkel and Roosa include 10 important sedges that should make those of us with only a rudimentary knowledge of the group more willing to wade in and give the sedges another try.

In addition to the pictures and descriptions the introductory sections give a natural history of wetland types and the species to be expected in each along with illustrations of most of the types. Runkel and Roosa's knowledge of the plants and communities of the state is evident in this section as they list locations of rare plants and give examples of outstanding sites. Adding to the usefulness of the book is an extensive bibliography and a glossary.

This book is going to make fieldwork in wetlands easier for naturalists and will serve as a vehicle by which more amateurs can be lured into the marshes and ponds.—PAUL CHRISTIANSEN, *Professor of Biology Emeritus, Cornell College, Mt. Vernon, IA 52314.*

An Illustrated Guide to Iowa Prairie Plants. Paul Christiansen and Mark Müller. 1999. University of Iowa Press, Iowa City, Iowa.

IX + 237 pages. ISBN 0-87745-660-7 hdbd., ISBN 0-87745-661-5 pbk. \$44.95 hdbd., \$22.95 pbk.

Iowans are increasingly aware of the significance of the tallgrass prairie, and efforts to preserve and protect this once-widespread ecosystem are ongoing. An obvious focus of these efforts is to conserve the native flora. When Bison and Elk disappeared from the landscape and row-crop agriculture appeared, a few of the native plants remained in old cemeteries, along roadsides, and in a few prairie remnants. Workers are now attempting to revitalize our prairies with native biodiversity by finding native plants and selectively harvesting their seeds for use in restoration projects. Efforts to locate and protect remnant native plant populations usually require the assistance of knowledgeable volunteers.

Christiansen and Müller have provided a comprehensive and accessible guide to the native prairie plants of Iowa which should be an outstanding resource for professional botanists, ecologists, and the interested layperson. Their book bridges the gap between exhaustive but highly technical botanical manuals, and "nature guides" which are aesthetic but lacking in content. The approach is to catalog all of the relevant plants (some 300 species) together with distribution information, ample illustrations, and useful characters for identification. Plants are grouped as Pteridophytes (non-flowering vascular plants), Dicots, and Monocots, and listed alphabetically by family. This presentation will be quite familiar to users of the Peterson or other popular field guides. The authors suggest other resources for "more positive identification," however this work will be quite sufficient for all but the most technical work.

The book is a good introduction to plant systematics for the uninitiated. A short Preface includes a brief discussion of the prairie biomes and the history and philosophy of restoration. The authors then present a species list, and a Family Finder and descriptions for identification of plant families (of which 47 are included in the book).

The heart of the book is the species descriptions and illustrations. The line art is excellent, dot maps indicate distribution in Iowa, and descriptions of all relevant plant parts are provided. The treatments are both complete and succinct. Similar species are also described, along with synonyms for the common or Latin names. The book concludes with a list of Iowa prairies open to the public, a glossary, references, and index.

Perhaps the book title should include the word "native," for no exotic species are included. I miss these, for knowing the prairie today also means knowing the common non-native species. Nevertheless, this book is a must for anyone interested in Iowa's native plants and their conservation.—PAUL WEIHE, *Asst. Prof. of Biology & Env. Science, Central College, Pella, IA 50219.*