

BOOK REVIEW #4

Christiansen, Paul and Mark Müller. *An Illustrated Guide to Iowa Prairie Plants*. 1999. ix + 237 pages; species lists; dichotomous keys; descriptions; illustrations; distribution maps; list of Iowa prairies; glossary; references; index. University of Iowa Press, Iowa City, IA. Cloth and Paper. Prices: US\$44.95 and \$22.95; respectively. Available from University of Iowa Press, 100 Kuhl House, Iowa City, IA 52242-1000.

Paul Christiansen, professor emeritus at Cornell College, is a lifetime student of Iowa prairies. This book is promoted as a guide to help others explore prairies that he finds so fascinating. A map depicting the extent of the prairie formation within the United States and narrative descriptions of tallgrass, midgrass, and shortgrass prairies are included in the preface. A brief description of the vegetation of the tallgrass prairie follows. Here, Iowa is identified as the only state completely within the tallgrass prairie formation. An introductory section describes the features of the book. It includes a list of species and two dichotomous keys to the families treated in the guide. The first key is based on flower characteristics and the second key on vegetative characteristics. Brief family descriptions follow.

Descriptions, distribution maps and illustrations are given for 284 species of plants common to Iowa prairie remnants. Technical terms are kept to a minimum and those used are carefully defined in a glossary. Descriptions, while lacking the technical detail found in more comprehensive manuals, are adequate for identifying the species included in the guide. Distribution maps are based on county records within the state. Illustrations of species show considerable detail and are generally based on direct field observations by the artist, Mark Müller. The high quality and detail of the illustrations make this book user-friendly. However, the sizes of some illustrations are initially confusing in that they do not correspond to plant sizes given in the text. For instance, on facing pages the illustration of *Monarda fistulosa* is much smaller than the illustration of *Prunella vulgaris* but the size of the latter plant is actually much smaller than the former.

The keys, descriptions and illustrations are designed for use in the field although the 8.5" x 11" physical format is not that of a typical field guide. Even though the 284 species treated in the guide constitute an extensive representation of the plants common to upland tallgrass prairies, extremely hydric species, extremely xeric species, woodland species and exotics are not included. Although the authors urge users to consult additional references for positive identifications, it would be appropriate to explicitly caution users, especially amateurs, to consult other references when specimens do not precisely fit given descriptions, because the specimens may represent species not covered in the guide. The reference section contains a list of 20 floral studies of Iowa and adjacent prairie states followed by a list of 11 natural history citations related to Iowa and the prairie formation. Also included is a list of 39 Iowa prairies open to the public. The book is an excellent resource for students of plant taxonomy and serious novices seeking to identify native plants of tallgrass prairie communities in Iowa, Illinois and elsewhere. Its simplicity, modest price, and extensive coverage make it particularly valuable for introducing high school and college students to plants of the tallgrass prairie.

Reviewer: Gerrit D. Van Dyke, Department of Biology, Trinity Christian College, 6601 West College Drive, Palos Heights, IL 60463