

BOTANY

A Field Guide to Seaweeds of the Pacific Northwest

By Bridgette Clarkson. 2015. Harbour Publishing, Box 219, Madeira Park, BC, Canada, V0N 2H0. 7.95 CAD, Plasticised pamphlet.

Seaweeds can be a bit frustrating. On a trip I normally pack a bird and a flower guide, so I do not have information on seaweeds with me. Back home I look at notes and photos to try and identify what I have seen. This not always ideal. A year ago I got a plasticised pamphlet on butterflies and it sits in my glove box (not in my bookcase in the house) and it has been so useful. I am now a fan of such publications, so welcome this lightweight guide.

The coast of British Columbia and Alaska is one of the best places to see seaweeds (and other rock pool

life). This pamphlet shows a selected 48 types from the 640 possible species. Some of the types are identified to genus only, as going to the species level is beyond this publications scope. The author takes two panels to introduce basic seaweed biology. This is worthwhile as most of us landlubbers only get to the coast at infrequent intervals. She then splits her photo identification section into four: brown, red, and green seaweeds, and seagrasses. So once you decide on the colour you can pick through the handful of pictures to get the best

match. Almost all the species range from Alaska south to Mexico or California.

I picked my way through and recognised about half the species depicted. Clearly I need to work on my red seaweed list. The easiest to pick out are the kelp species, particularly the iconic Bull Kelp (*Nereocystis luetkeana*). Most people will be familiar with Rockweed or Bladderwrack (*Fucus* species). Indeed my notes (from 1963) show this is the first genus I identified. Another easy pick is the bright green Sea Lettuce (*Ulva linza*), a species with a very wide distribution. The author uses the green seaweeds to raise the issues of harvesting. As she says, seaweeds are delicious, but we need a conservation ethic when harvesting. My person-

al favourite is Miyeok or Wakame (*Undaria pinnatifida*), a lovely crunchy dish from Korea.

This is a delightful guide and, as it weighs only a few grams and takes up no space, I will not be leaving it behind. I expect to be on the west coast next February and I look forward to using this pamphlet in the field. It is a good purchase for any naturalist and an ideal stocking stuffer. (Harbour has also just published a similar pamphlet – *A Field Guide to Common Fishes of the Pacific Northwest*.)

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