

haps best summarized by the concluding words of the introduction, which leave us with the statement that "If we can grasp that we *are* the world we depend on, then we will find where we truly belong and get on with seeking a way to live in harmony within a rich, vibrant community of living things."

This book is a unique and insightful pictorial exploration of the complex relationships between humans and planet earth. The book is both aestheti-

cally attractive and intellectually engaging, making it an excellent gift for either scientist or layperson with an interest in natural history and conservation.

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Great Wildlife of the Great Plains

By Paul A. Johnsgard. 2003. University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, USA. 309 pages.

Great Wildlife of the Great Plains is a narrative book about the species representative of the Great Plains, from the grasslands of Texas to the mixed prairies of Canada. The text highlights 121 species of birds and mammals, with each chapter covering a different geographic area. After a short introduction describing the different geographical regions, Johnsgard presents eight chapters based on geography: (tallgrass prairie (Chapter 2), mixed-grass prairie (Chapter 3), short-grass prairie (Chapter 4), sandhills grasslands (Chapter 5), arid shrubsteppes (Chapter 6), riverine and upland hardwood forests (Chapter 7), coniferous forests and woodlands (Chapter 8), and prairie wetlands (Chapter 9). The last three chapters take a different approach, with an overall presentation of the most common wildlife species (Chapter 10), then seasonal or occasional species (Chapter 11 "Migrants and drifters"), and concludes with a chapter discussing some of the recurring themes and conservation challenges (Chapter 12 "What is still so great about the Great Plains"). This last one invites the reader to visit this region, even if only "Armed with an inquiring mind and a field guide or two..." (page 212).

The book has a well-recognized bird bias: the author readily admits the bias in the preface (page xiii), and warns that the coverage is 61% birds, 23% mammals, and 16% reptiles and amphibians (based on 121 species discussed). However, my perception is that the book emphasizes birds even more, and I would have to guess that 75% of the actual text refers to birds, a bias likely arising from the author's expertise and background being mostly ornithological. The bias is less pronounced in the illustrations, with 73 figures devoted to birds (50%), mammals (33%), reptiles and amphibians (10%), and geographic maps (7%). The book does present most species of interest, but maybe one

interesting species missing is the raccoon (see species index pages 305-309). Although the latter is not an "icon" of the Great Plains, this species is of great interest since it has been colonizing the northern prairies recently.

The format is pleasing, and the drawings help illustrate the species mentioned. Perhaps even more useful is the provision of five appendices illustrating tracks and sign of Great Plains species (Appendix 1), a list of nature preserves and natural areas (Appendix 2), a list of birds (Appendix 3), a list of mammals (Appendix 4), and a list of reptiles and amphibians (Appendix 5). The lists are not exhaustive, and do contain some errors in scientific names (see black-footed ferret, page 258, and nutria page 262). Nonetheless, they provide the reader unfamiliar with the Great Plains a good idea of which species can be found in which habitat and what states.

The book is narrative, and the prose makes it more palatable for lay audiences. The author's anecdotes of his childhood in North Dakota are often referred to (examples on pages 17, 19) and, in my opinion, add a "real-life touch" to an otherwise informational piece. The book is probably most valuable as an overview of what species are found in each geographic region, and in that respect, is best suited to those unfamiliar with the respective areas. To the latter, this book leaves few stones unturned, and is a good addition to the naturalist interested in learning more about the Great Plains and the wildlife to be encountered therein.

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