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Review of *The Desert Grassland* Edited by Mitchel P. McClaran and Thomas R. Van Devender

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BOOK REVIEWS

The Desert Grassland. Edited by Mitchel P. McClaran and Thomas R. Van Devender. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995. ix+346 pp. Tables, figures, references, index. $42.00 cloth (ISBN 0-8165-1580-8), $19.95 paper (ISBN 0-8165-1823-8).

The Desert Grassland examines the complexities of an extremely diverse community. Although focusing specifically on desert grassland systems, it offers an excellent overview of the structure and function of grassland ecosystems on the whole, making it a resource for academicians, land managers, and laypersons in more mesic environments. The volume also functions well as a guide for inquisitive tourists.

Nine chapters grouped under four sections make up the book's organization. Section One (chapters 1 and 2) functions primarily as an introduction to desert grasslands. Their formative history is the focus of Section Two (chapters 3, 4, and 5). Section Three (chapters 6 and 7) presents a survey of animal community structure, while Section Four (chapters 8 and 9) reviews human impacts and the restoration of desert grasslands.

Chapter 1, a broad-based introduction, discusses climate and vegetation, providing excellent examples of spatial and biotic variability in four public areas with decades of research history. It also contains sound information on plant morphology. Chapter 2, an excellent discussion of coexisting growth forms, should particularly pique the interest of plant ecophysiologists. Chapters 3 and 4 examine the history of desert grassland formation; chapter 5 offers a fine discussion of fire. The diversity, variability, and functional roles of invertebrates and vertebrates are the focus of chapter 6 and 7. Chronicling specific impacts of human habitation and activity on the grasslands of southeastern Arizona from Amerindians, Spanish, and Mexicans to present Anglo-American occupation, chapter 8 raises timely issues in natural resource management. Chapter 9, which includes the book's most field-applied information, evaluates desert grassland revegetation and discusses vegetational changes over time. The wealth of references at the conclusion of each chapter, as well as the list of common and scientific names for plants and animals in the appendices, further increase the value of this important study.

Well written and complemented by excellent black-and-white photographs, illustrations, and presentations of data, *The Desert Grassland* is my

recommendation as the best single resource on arid and semi-arid grassland ecology. **Rob Mitchell,** *Department of Range, Wildlife and Fisheries Management, Texas Tech University.*