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## Review of *The Niobrara: A River Running through Time*. By Paul A. Johnsgard.

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**The Niobrara: A River Running through Time.** By Paul A. Johnsgard. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007. xv + 375 pp. Maps, illustrations, tables, appendices, glossary, references, index. \$21.95 paper.

Originating in Wyoming, the Niobrara is mostly a Nebraska river as it dances along the South Dakota border to join the Missouri. Native tribes named it for its “running water,” but it failed to run where early Europeans wanted to go. Lewis and Clark passed by; river travelers also stayed on the Missouri; overland travelers chose the Platte. Only a few trappers came this way, followed later by military and agricultural venturers.

Consisting of 10 chapters, *The Niobrara* opens with an introductory geological and archeological history of the western Great Plains, with local references to the Niobrara Valley. Chapter 2 relates a human history, emphasizing the Lakotas and generally passing over other tribes and the European invasion. These are coarse overviews, accompanied by figures lacking legends to scale and direction.

The following chapters summarize studies that have been conducted in or have relevance to drainage. Chapter 3 describes the upland, lowland, and wetland floras. These

descriptions generally ignore landscape changes of the last century (e.g., stabilization of the sandhills) and end with terse mention of moist-soil exotic invaders.

Chapter 4 discusses animal distributions and habitats, and chapter 5 considers biogeography and biodiversity, strongly emphasizing post-Pleistocene biogeographic faunal affinities—the strength of the volume for the naturalist reader. Review of biotic dynamics during the more recent European era (e.g., Bogan, M.A. 1996. Historical changes in the landscape and vertebrate diversity of north central Nebraska. *Ecological Studies* 125:105-30) would have nicely bridged the paleologic background with subsequent chapters addressing conservation issues.

Following a healthy review of avian hybrid zones in chapter 6 that ends with a brief summary of breeding and autumn bird populations, chapter 7 discusses 15 species (in reverse taxonomic order: 4 mammals, 3 birds, 1 reptile,

4 fishes, and 3 plants) of special conservation concern. Chapters 8 (by Jon Farrar) and 9 (by Duane Gudgel) trace histories of the Niobrara as scenic and recreational resources, respectively, and chapter 10 summarizes preceding chapters with a few closing thoughts. The volume ends with three appendices totaling 60 pages: a list of species (again in reverse taxonomic order), English names of plants mentioned, and of-interest biotic sites within the region.

Paul Johnsgard has authored an exemplary list of books as an ornithologist and natural historian. This volume approaches (may actually be) his 50th. *The Niobrara* reads as if one is on an auto tour with a premier naturalist who has a trunk full of documented species data. Residents from Harrison to Niobrara will find herein a welcome overview of their own unique natural history. **Fritz L. Knopf**, U.S. Department of Interior (retired), Fort Collins, Colorado.