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**Review of *A Field Guide to the Natural World of the Twin Cities* by
John J. Moriarty, photography by Siah L. St. Clair**

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A FIELD GUIDE TO THE NATURAL WORLD OF THE TWIN CITIES.

John J. Moriarty; photography by Siah L. St. Clair. 2018. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA. 412 + xv pages. \$29.95 (paper). ISBN: 978-1-5179-0549-1.

A Field Guide to the Natural World of the Twin Cities has two foci: natural areas in the Twin Cities of Minnesota and the species that live in each. The geographical scope is the seven counties that envelop Minneapolis and Saint Paul. The author describes nine major habitat types that can be found there: prairie, savanna, big woods, oak woods, wetlands (marshes and swamps), fens and bogs, lakes, rivers, and urban and suburban. It is useful to know that “big woods” are not just woods that are large in extent, but woodlands that occur in Minnesota and western Wisconsin dominated by sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*), American basswood (*Tilia americana*), American elm (*Ulmus americana*), and white oak (*Quercus alba*; although some sources say red oak [*Quercus rubra*] rather than white oak).

The book’s Introduction provides a useful start to navigating through the information in the book. Each habitat type merits a color-coded section, introduced with a two-page photo by Siah L. St. Clair. Superimposed on these gorgeous scenes are images of a few species typical of the habitat. Unfortunately, the size and placement of the species photos added to the landscape photo seem odd, due to either location or scale.

Introductory text for each habitat type includes dominant plant species, understories, typical animals, and the like. Associated with the description of each habitat type is a text box on a topic relating to current conservation issues. The introduction to prairies, for example, has a text box on pollinators, and the chapter on savannas has a text box on terrestrial invasive species. The lakes section describes the causes and effects of water-level fluctuations, both natural and man-made. Other topics include habitat restoration and urbanization of wildlife.

Mentioned following the habitat introduction are (usually four) sites in the metro area where the habitat can be found. Each site features on one page a map displaying major habitats at the site, and on a second page a site description, special features, and species to be expected. Maps are very clear and well-described, especially important for the scale at which the map is printed. The site description tells how to get there, what to expect, and the paths and trails available to explore the area. All sites are publicly owned, by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, or a local park district. This book reminds us how much we owe to those who championed the protection of Minnesota’s natural landscapes. They recognized that, once gone, those landscapes could never be re-created, and the diversity of the landscapes, plants, and animals would be forever lost.

After each site description are one-page accounts of species that are characteristic of the habitat type. Nearly half of each page is taken up by one to three amazing photos of the species. St. Clair must have had high-quality equipment and the patience of Job to capture such images. The text for each species includes its description, specific habitats used, and tidbits about its natural history. Did you know the northern short-tailed shrew (*Blarina brevicauda*), found in urban and suburban areas, is the only venomous mammal in the United States? Or that yellow garden spiders (*Argiope aurantia*), found throughout the Twin Cities, always weave a vertical zig-zag pattern in their web? These are interesting factoids, but we would have preferred even more information and a little less white space.

The species featured in this book cover a wide variety of taxa. The prairie section, for example, includes four grasses, seven forbs, two butterflies, two other insects, two arachnids, one amphibian, two reptiles, four birds, and two mammals. Most species are not restricted to a single habitat type, of course. Eastern tiger salamanders (*Ambystoma tigrinum*) are to be found not only in prairies, where its account lies, but also in savannas, wetlands, and lakes, as Appendix B points out. If you do not find a particular species in one of the sites highlighted, check Appendix A, which identifies additional metro locations where you can find each habitat type.

Species that are invasive get noted as such, although the distinction between invasive and exotic is not clearly made. A few minor errors do not distract; e.g., writing gramma instead of grama (*Bouteloua*) grasses (page 45); asserting that a legume produces rather than fixes nitrogen (page 75); and stating that male American Redstarts (*Setophaga ruticilla*) are black and orange, whereas first-year males, like females, are black and yellow (page 96).

Whatever level of expertise or experience that readers have, they will find themselves inspired to get out and explore new places, search for unfamiliar species, or find their interest piqued to learn more. There is so much out there to be discovered! That’s the joy of this book, which will serve well both residents of and visitors to the Twin Cities.—Douglas H. Johnson¹ and Bonnie Sample². ¹Adjunct Professor, University of Minnesota, Saint Paul, Minnesota 55108, USA; ²Independent Scientist, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55406, USA.