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October 1996

Review of *NEBRASKAland Magazine's Weather and Climate of Nebraska, Lincoln: Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, 1996*

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Naber Knox, Pamela, "Review of *NEBRASKAland Magazine's Weather and Climate of Nebraska, Lincoln: Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, 1996*" (1996). *Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and Social Sciences*. 300.

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NEBRASKAland Magazine's Weather and Climate of Nebraska. Lincoln: Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, 1996. 138 pp. Photos, maps, and illustrations. \$12.96 paper (ISSN 0028-1964).

Weather and Climate of Nebraska is a colorful new atlas describing the seasonal variations of weather in the central High Plains. Published as the

January-February 1996 issue of NEBRASKAland magazine, it can also stand alone as a general reference text. The title's layout emphasizes "Weather" over "Climate," a theme that pervades much of the atlas.

The publication contains seven major chapters plus introduction, almanac, glossary, and index. Following the Introduction, which sets the stage in Nebraska, Chapter One describes the reasons for the seasons and how seasonal variations affect the state. Chapters Two through Five highlight weather and climate features particular to each season: Chapter Two (Spring) describes severe weather and tornadoes; Chapter Three (Summer), drought and heat stress; Chapter Four (Fall), the autumnal transition from summer to winter; and Chapter Five (Winter), blizzards and types of precipitation. Following these seasonal descriptions, Chapter Six lists sources of weather and climate data and explains how these data are collected, while Chapter Seven discusses Nebraska's past climates and possible changes in the future. Geographers from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln are responsible for all the chapters except the first, which is by a geographer at Kansas State.

Weather and Climate of Nebraska has many strengths that make it an excellent guide to Nebraska's weather for the general public. Foremost among these are its numerous beautiful images portraying both actual weather events and their impact on Nebraska residents. Interesting sidebars, a second strong feature, are scattered throughout the text linking the main discussion to related topics such as the effect of weather on wildlife, weather and climate folklore, and broadcast meteorology, many written by specialists in these areas. Both the primary text and the sidebars are generally well-written and introduce many surprising climate and weather tidbits. Weather safety information is also included.

The atlas is not without weaknesses. Its focus on weather rather than climate and longer-term conditions results in a curiously abbreviated climate statistics section (Almanac) containing only a few graphs and maps of average temperature, precipitation, and other variables across the state, plus individual station data for only January and July, the two extreme months. Seasonal maps in Chapters Two through Five might have enhanced the discussion of Nebraska's temporal and spatial climate variations.

Another weakness is a lack of consistent terminology, with a heavy use of meteorological jargon, from one chapter to another, probably the result of multiple authorship. I was surprised that low and high pressure systems receive no mention, since most people are familiar with them from broadcast weather reports. The description of the greenhouse effect and climate change is particularly confusing and incomplete, focusing on only one relatively

minor aspect of how climate might be transformed as a result of increases in carbon dioxide and other man-made gases.

I recommend *Weather and Climate of Nebraska* as a good introduction to the meteorology and climatology of the High Plains, particularly suitable for schools and the general public but also potentially useful for introductory meteorology courses at the college level as a supplemental text. Readers will enjoy its accessible prose and well-done figures, and will marvel at its superb photographic portrayal of the weather. **Pamela Naber Knox**, *Wisconsin State Climatologist and President, American Association of State Climatologists, Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey, Madison*.