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Review of Catalog of the Colorado Flora: A Biodiversity Baseline.

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Catalog of the Colorado Flora: A Biodiversity Baseline. By William A. Weber and Ronald C. Wittmann. Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1992. Introduction, bibliography. xi + 215 pp. \$34.95.

The estimation and documentation of biological diversity has and should continue to be approached from different perspectives. Such include the empirical study of vegetation by ecologists, the study of genetic structure and life histories by population biologists, and the study of evolutionary relationships by systematists. The monograph by Weber and Wittmann represents a product of the latter perspective, a catalog of scientific names for plants (excepting algae) native to or naturalized in Colorado.

Nomenclature is basic to the "language" of biology; it is essential to the organization of taxonomic information and to the discipline of floristics, the comparative study of local and regional floras. The political boundaries of Colorado embrace parts of three major physiographic regions or biomes: the Great Plains, the Rocky Mountains, and the Great Basin. Because of significant floristic differences among these regions, Weber and Wittmann's catalog is useful to all botanists seriously interested in nomenclature applicable to the plants of western North America. Plant taxonomists will find the catalog particularly useful because its general lists of taxa (under separate sections for vascular plants, mosses, hepatics, and lichens) include references and known type localities for all taxa originally described from Colorado collections. The

catalog also accounts for all names used in several comprehensive and historically important manuals that permit identification and provide brief descriptions of Colorado plants, most notably P. Rydberg's *Flora of Colorado* (1906) and H. Harrington's *Manual of the Plants of Colorado* (1954). Students unfamiliar with Weber's philosophy concerning the circumscription of some families and genera will find many accepted names inconsistent with those used in other references. These are accounted for in an abbreviated synonymy. Unfortunately, the lists of synonyms, albeit arranged in useful alphabetical order, are keyed to cumbersome "nomenclature codes" or acronyms that were designed primarily for an electronic database. Consequently, the search for synonymy under accepted names in the "General Lists of Taxa" requires identification of the acronym, followed by deciphering of its code. The extensive bibliography is an exhaustive compilation of literature critical to the taxonomy of the plants of Colorado and adjacent regions and could stand by itself as a significant baseline for understanding and interpreting Colorado's rich botanical diversity.

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