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2007

Review of Wild Orchids of the Prairies and Great Plains Region of North America.

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Ames, Doris, "Review of Wild Orchids of the Prairies and Great Plains Region of North America." (2007). *Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and Social Sciences*. 898.

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Wild Orchids of the Prairies and Great Plains Region of North America. By Paul Martin Brown. Illustrated by Stan Folsom. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006. x + 342 pp. Photographs, maps, illustrations, appendixes, glossary, bibliography, index. \$29.95 paper.

There are orchidophiles who think big, and the prolific author of this book, which covers a vast geographical area and includes 73 species and varieties of wild orchids, is surely one of them.

The book is well organized and divided into four sections. Part 1 includes an introduction to the prairies and Great Plains of North America, a brief introduction to orchid biology, and an excellent key to the genera. Part 2 includes genus and species accounts. "References and Resources," part 3, consists of orchid checklists, statistics, updated information on the use of Carlyle Luer's native orchid books along with this one, and more. Part 4, "Orchid Hunting," discusses orchids that may be found in specific localities in the region. Appendixes follow, which include orchid distribution and blooming times charts, accompanied by a glossary, bibliography, and index.

Being an orchid fanatic, I went straight to the genus and species accounts, each consisting of a genus account and species key followed by the individual species accounts for that genus. Each species account includes two pages: the first contains the species description, including a line drawing of the plant, its range, habitat, flowering period, and additional comments; on the facing page are several color photos and a range map based on herbarium specimens. Many of the photographs show unusual forms, but at the same time the author often does not include enough good close-up photographs or detailed line drawings to illustrate clearly the identifying characteristics of each species.

It is not really surprising, considering the tremendous geographical scope of the book, that details about orchids are often incomplete. For instance, the species accounts do not include information about the seed capsules or the

pollinators for each orchid. It would have been helpful, moreover, had the author included the names of regional field guides under all the different localities he mentions in the "Orchid Hunting" section since regional guides can offer ground-truthed orchid information. They can also provide close-up photographs that show the color and growth habits of species found in that particular place.

Because of its large size and more generalized information this compendium has limited value as a field guide. It will, however, make a useful contribution to the conservation of the North American grasslands and the orchids that live there. The prairies and Great Plains grasslands are disappearing at an alarming rate, and many species of plants and animals are on the verge of extinction. This attractive orchid book will help make people aware of some of the beautiful species we will lose if we continue to abuse "our sea of grass." **Doris Ames**, *President, Native Orchid Conservation Inc., Winnipeg.*