

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and
Social Sciences

Great Plains Studies, Center for

February 1991

Review of *Northern Prairie Wetlands*, Arnold van der Valk, Editor

Richard A. Gersib

Wildlife Division, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, rger461@ecy.wa.gov

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsresearch>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

Gersib, Richard A., "Review of *Northern Prairie Wetlands*, Arnold van der Valk, Editor" (1991). *Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and Social Sciences*. 21.
<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsresearch/21>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and Social Sciences by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

does he really venture beyond summarizing data. He employs a quantitative population projection technique to estimate that Cherokee mortality during forced removal could have exceeded 10,000, compared to the oft-cited contemporary guess of 4000.

Thornton deals with most demographic issues with caution or by compromise. For example, he fixes aboriginal territory at 120,000 km², just slightly more than the average of 103,600 and 134,400 km² given by A. L. Kroeber. While Thornton mentions Cherokee food production and abundant natural food resources, he only raises to 25 Douglas Ubelaker's estimate of population density of 24-people per 100 km². Thornton ignores my thesis that native density south of the sub-Arctic was nowhere less than 100 people per 100 km². Thus, he estimates 30,000 ancestral Cherokees instead of 120,000 or more. Henry F. Dobyns, *Edmond, OK*.

Northern Prairie Wetlands. Arnold van der Valk, Editor. Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1989. Maps, tables, photographs, graphs, index, bibliography. xiv + 400 pp. \$38.95 cloth (ISBN 8138-0037-4).

We know that wetlands provide important habitat for waterfowl and other wildlife species. However, we are only now beginning to understand how and why wetlands function the way they do, what drives a wetland system, and how human activities affect them.

This book provides an exceptionally thorough technical review of the ecology of both shallow and deepwater wetland systems within the prairie pothole region of the United States and Canada and the Sandhills region of Nebraska. The book developed from a regional wetland symposium sponsored by the National Wetlands Technical Council in 1985. It has been written to serve both wetland ecologists and managers, as well as people with a professional interest in northern prairie wetlands who may have but a limited background in wetland ecology.

The book consists of 11 chapters that address key wetland components such as hydrology, water chemistry, vegetation, waterfowl, mammals, fish, and food chain support with primary focus on the prairie pothole region. One chapter addresses the overall water and wetland resources of the Nebraska Sandhills. This impressive list of subjects could only have been improved with a chapter on the values northern prairie wetlands provide to shorebirds and wading birds.

Van der Valk and symposium organizers have done an exceptional job of bringing together many of the region's leading scientists to author various chapters. Each chapter starts with an abstract and a key word

section to provide the reader with a general overview of the text. A detailed review of the scientific literature for each topic is presented in a well written and generously illustrated manner. Numerous figures and tables support and strengthen the text while cited references, which exceed 125 source papers in some chapters, make the book an even greater wealth of information. Of special note is the exceptionally written and illustrated chapter by Kantrud, Millar, and van der Valk entitled "Vegetation of Wetlands of the Prairie Pothole Region."

While short references are made to Sandhills, wetlands throughout the book, author Jean Novacek has done an excellent job of consolidating the scattered literature on this unique wetland complex into the book's final chapter. This chapter represents the most thorough, up-to-date reference source available for the Sandhills.

Van der Valk, the National Wetlands Technical Council, and all authors are to be commended for their efforts to advance our overall knowledge of northern prairie wetlands. I highly recommend this volume to all wetland ecologists and managers as well as other professionals in county, state, federal, and private agencies concerned with the conservation of this valuable natural resource. **Richard A. Gersib, Wildlife Division, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.**

Colorado Flora: Eastern Slope. William A. Weber. Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1990. Maps, figures, photographs, glossary, indexes, xxxvi + 396 pp. \$19.95 paper (ISBN 0-87081-214-9).

All 2260 plant species of eastern-slope Colorado--from the continental divide east to the Nebraska and Kansas borders--can be identified using this book. That figure includes not only the native species but also the numerous introduced ones that survive without cultivation and often provide severe competition for the native flora. Much of Colorado's native plains flora was eliminated in the past century by plowing and by grazing livestock. It is largely replaced by a few durable native and many aggressive exotic species that thrive under those conditions, but remnants of the original flora exist on escarpments and in a few level places.

This book complements its author's *Colorado Flora: Western Slope* (1987) and *Rocky Mountain Flora* (1972), and the three provide the easiest way to identify all the state's plants. Although it has 64 color photographs and 103 pages of line drawings, this book is not to be riffled through in hope of finding a likeness of a plant. It is a technical treatment, as well it must be to cram so much information into 396 pages. Three hundred