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Review of *Common Flora of the Playa Lakes* by David A. Haukos and Loren M. Smith

Kelly W. Allred
New Mexico State University

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Common Flora of the Playa Lakes. David A. Haukos and Loren M. Smith. Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 1997. 208 pp. Table, photos, appendix, references, index. \$18.95 paper (ISBN 0-89672-388-7).

Common Flora of the Playa Lakes is a photo-guide to the common plants of the playa wetlands of the Southern Great Plains (southeastern Colorado, southwestern Kansas, western Oklahoma, eastern New Mexico, and northwest Texas). The authors state their objectives are to provide “a quick, accurate, photographic guide to common plant species found in playa wetlands,” as well as “a comprehensive list of plant species found in playas,” and a “baseline dataset that researchers can use to evaluate future changes in playa floral communities.” They have succeeded on all three counts.

Softbound in a convenient 6-by-9-by-1/2-inch field size, the volume opens by outlining the objectives and methods the authors used in surveying

233 playa wetlands and in assembling information from other sources. This is followed by a brief, informative discussion of the history and ecology of playa lakes, introducing the topography and climate of the area, theories on playa formation, ecological phenomena, threats from agriculture and urbanization, and conservation issues.

The bulk of the book is devoted to species treatments of seventy-five (the back cover says seventy-two) playa plants, each species allocated two pages, with color photos on the left leaf and text on the right. The photographs are nearly all superb, exhibiting general habit and distinguishing features with sharpness and clarity. The accompanying text includes scientific and common names, synonyms, description, growing season, wetland indicator status (obligate, facultative, etc.), abundance, soil moisture, wildlife use, and distribution within the study area. Species are arranged alphabetically within families and genera. This section is the highlight of the book and accomplishes in fine fashion its primary purpose of providing a guide to the common plants of playa wetlands. Unlike many other guides of this sort, grasses are well represented with fifteen species, second only to the sunflowers, with seventeen species descriptions. Although advertised as a guide to the common plants, the book describes two-thirds of the species listed as uncommon or rare. This is not a draw-back, however, since we need accurate identification guides to little-known, though critical, plants such as *Ammannia auriculata*, *Marsilea vestita*, *Heteranthera limosa*, *Potamogeton nodosus*, and *Bacopa rotundifolia*.

The species descriptions are followed by an appendix listing the 350 or so plants known to occur in playa wetlands of the Southern Great Plains, literature cited, a glossary of terms, and an index.

Errors are few and annoyances slight. The only serious slip is the misidentification of *Hordeum jubatum* on page 132 as *Sitanion hystrix*. Unfortunately, the guide suffers from the problem endemic to all such volumes: not enough species. Fewer than a quarter of the plants known from playa wetlands are treated. Though these are presumably the commonly encountered species, a user is probably as likely to pick a plant not in the book as one that is. The difficulty in presenting the majority of the plants of a particular area is understandable, but more than four *Cyperaceae* (sedges) and one *Alismataceae* (arrow-weeds), for example, would have been welcome.

Still, this is a valuable contribution to wetlands ecology sure to be used and appreciated by numerous scientists and students of the playa lakes flora. **Kelly W. Allred**, Range Science Herbarium, Department of Animal and Range Sciences, New Mexico State University.