

Younger brother Howard Jones, who also became a medical doctor, enjoyed roaming the woods and fields and supplied most of the nests and eggs that went into the family “cabinet” and became the reference library for the drawings. Genevieve’s mother, Virginia, supported any project her daughter was involved with but had no personal interest in ornithology and natural history. She also had no training as an artist. After Genevieve’s death, Virginia’s love for her daughter and wishes to honor her memory inspired her to join her husband and son in the project. Virginia taught herself the skills needed to draw on the lithographic stones and how to color them. Genevieve’s friend, Eliza Shulze, drew additional plates and helped Virginia finish the coloring of plates. In all, Genevieve drew only five plates, Eliza did ten plates, Howard drew eleven plates (of 66 species of birds’ eggs), and Virginia completed the remaining 42 plates. Several other family friends were hired to help color the plates for the final book.

William Brewster, co-founder of the American Ornithologists’ Union, claimed the original plates a masterpiece unrivaled by any work since Audubon. Elliot Coues, editor of the AOU’s journal *The Auk*, wrote that the series “promises to be one of the great illustrated works on North American Ornithology.” As the original is so obscure, anyone interested in birds’ nests and eggs should find this both a useful reference as well as a delightful and inspiring artistic accomplishment. Kiser discovered a copy of the 1886 book while working as a librarian at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History and became interested enough to search out the history behind the original book. Kiser’s narrative of Genevieve’s zeal for the project and her family’s love and devotion to carry the book to completion can be an inspiration to citizen scientists everywhere. Joy Kiser is to be thanked for bringing both the art and the story of its production to the public eye.

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***Discovery and Renewal on Huffman Prairie: Where Aviation Took Wing.*** 2018. David Nolin. Kent State University Press. Kent, Ohio. 208 pages.  
ISBN 978-1-60635-346-2.

JOHN MUIR WROTE “WHEN WE TRY TO PICK OUT anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.” David Nolin’s book about Huffman Prairie is an excellent example of this concept. Nolin clearly shows the connections—in both directions—

between the natural environment and the rich history of this special place.

Huffman Prairie today is a 114-acre fragment of its original area within the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, a short distance east of Dayton, Ohio. In 1986 the natural portion of the Huffman Prairie was designated as an Ohio Natural Landmark Area and in 1990, Huffman Prairie Flying Field was designated as a National Historic Landmark. It is a component of the National Aviation Heritage Area.

The book weaves together several themes: an excellent history of the land even before the Wright brothers got involved, the brothers’ work on developing and improving airplane design, and the eventual development of Wright-Patterson Air Force Base (which encompasses the Huffman Prairie). Furthermore, it documents the native prairie, its flora, fauna, and overall ecology. Finally, it details the re-discovery of the prairie as well as work to restore and make it accessible to the public. Both the history and natural history are richly illustrated with historic black-and-white photos, as well as beautiful color photos of the prairie flora and fauna.

Nolin retired in 2015 after 32 years working with the Five Rivers MetroParks in land acquisition and habitat management, ending his career as director of conservation. Certainly, his professional background enabled and enriched his work on Huffman Prairie.

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His book reveals his zeal for preserving and restoring Huffman Prairie and one suspects he spent many hours of personal time on prairie restoration and writing this book.

Nolin obviously read extensively about the history of the Wright brothers and searched out extensive archives on the early history of the area. He details the first explorations of the region and the settlements of the site by William P. Huffman and his descendants, who owned the land when the Wright brothers flew their first plane. He also details later developments from ditching, building railways and roadways, and the site’s establishment as an air force base. He introduces and enriches all this history with a wealth of historic photos. Nolin also documents the impact of glaciers over Ohio and the changes that followed, especially the Xerothermic Period when the “Prairie Peninsula” expanded into west-central Ohio. In 1984, Nolin stumbled across Huffman Prairie. He not only studied

and enjoyed the site, but he initiated and worked with many other individuals to get the prairie restored and preserved. The story of the prairie restoration, preservation, and opening of the area to the public is by itself a wonderful and inspiring tale.

Equally valuable to the basic chapters of this book are Nolin's multiple appendices and notes. Among these are a description of the current Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historic Park, fourteen pages of an annotated list of the flora of Huffman Prairie, eight pages of references, and an excellent index.

Anyone interested in the history of flight should enjoy this book on Ohio's role in those developments. Anyone interested in the natural history of prairies and restoration efforts will equally enjoy this book. I found both stories fascinating and well researched.

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***The Prairie Peninsula.*** 2017. Gary Meszaros and Guy L. Denny. Kent State University Press. Kent, Ohio. 136 pages. ISBN 978-1-60635-320-2.

**W**HEN MOST OHIOANS THINK OF TALLGRASS prairie, they think of Kansas and Nebraska—far west of Ohio. However, a large portion of Ohio's landscape was once covered with prairie and a few small patches remain. These outliers are elements of the Prairie Peninsula. This book by Meszaros and Denny offers an excellent written and visual introduction to these remnant prairies.

Long after the last ice age, the midwestern climate continued to warm between 6,000 and 4,000 years ago. The landscape then experienced an extended warm and dry spell known as the Hypsithermal Interval, or Xerothermic Period. The drought allowed the western tallgrass prairie to expand eastward as the Prairie Peninsula. The area later cooled, allowing the eastern forests to expand again, but leaving patches of prairie in portions of Ohio, as well as Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Ontario. Some of these prairies still covered a thousand acres or more in 1800. Ohio had perhaps 1,500 square miles of prairie at that time, but today less than one percent of these prairies remain.

***In five brief chapters, Meszaros and Denny document the many variations of prairie ecosystems, the ecology of their communities of flora and fauna, and the amazing biological diversity of prairies.***

In five brief chapters, Meszaros and Denny document the many variations of prairie ecosystems, the ecology of their communities of flora and fauna, and the amazing biological diversity of prairies. In a final chapter, they highlight selected remnants of tallgrass prairie from the five states and the province of Ontario. The areas selected are outstanding, high quality, original remnants with the greatest biological diversity.

There are two strong themes throughout this book. The main theme is the rich biological diversity of prairies. While people often think of prairies as grasslands, they also have a rich diversity of flowering, herbaceous plants. The authors note that the best of the prairies may hold as many as 250 species of plants per acre. Up to 80 percent of these species are herbaceous plants. The herbaceous plants compose only ten to twenty percent of the total biomass, with a handful of grass species making up the remainder of the biomass. Add to this a wide variety of insects, birds, reptiles, and mammals that are inter-related and, in some cases, dependent upon the prairie ecosystem. The authors share many insights on this diverse flora and fauna.

While biologically the theme of diversity appears most important, the book's emphasis on aesthetics are at least equally important in the overall presentation. Without flaunting it, the authors share the amazing beauty that prairies offer. In this paperback only 36 pages are dedicated to text, while 81 pages highlight the excellent color photographs of author Meszaros.

This book offers a great visual introduction to the Prairie Peninsula, backed by solid professional research. Meszaros's images have been published in numerous magazines and books for over 40 years and he traveled extensively to photo-document the prairies of this region. Denny is a retired chief of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Natural Areas and Preserves.

In this role, and previous roles within the division, he spent many years studying, managing, and protecting prairie remnants around Ohio. In addition to visiting prairies throughout the multi-state region, he also established and maintains his own personal prairie near his home. The two authors have brought together a valuable yet inexpensive book that anyone interested in the natural landscape will enjoy.

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