

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.

WHEN 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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