

## WILDFLOWERS ACROSS THE PRAIRIES

R. VANCE, J. R. JOWSEY and J. S. McLEAN. 1977. Western Producer Prairie Books, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. 214 pp. \$8.95 paperback, \$14.95 hardcover.

This highly attractive volume presents a welcome addition to available information resources, especially for nonprofessionals, on the natural history of the Canadian prairies. The excellent color photographs of many of the more common and conspicuous wildflowers of this region should stimulate many even casual readers to new or renewed interest in nature around them. Hopefully such increased awareness of nature will trigger a greater appreciation on the part of many more persons of the value of conserving natural areas with their contained wild flowers and other wildlife. While this book includes no identification guides or keys except for an appended color index, the colored reproductions are realistic and clear enough to allow for visual field identification of many wild flower species even by nature-lovers with little or no botanical training or experience.

In this book, 186 wildflower species are fully described and pictured, each on a separate page, and 75 additional related species are pictured and referred to in a brief text sentence contrasting their distribution or some distinguishing features, for an overall total of about 170 species featured. The volume does not, nor does it purport to, cover all naturally occurring species of flowering plants on the grasslands and forest edges of the Canadian Prairie provinces and the adjacent Great Plains states. About 200 species of flowering plants are included by Budd and Best (*Wild Plants of the Canadian Prairies*, 1964); thus, the present publication describes less than 16% and pictures less than 25% of these, so readers should not assume that it fully covers the entire flora. This is certainly not

intended as a critical comment since the publication is far more inclusive than are most such illustrated wild flower books.

The truly outstanding feature of this book, in my opinion, is the colored photography, primarily by Fenton R. Vance, but also including contributions from various other members of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society. Most of these photographs show a remarkable clarity of floral details and near-natural coloration. Simultaneously the publishers must be complimented for their unusually excellent reproductions of these photographs in the book copies, retaining the clarity and natural coloration of the originals. Nevertheless, a few reproductions in my copy do show some potentially misleading flower color distortions which should be noted by readers: p. 15 (lower left) too red rather than orange-red; p. 94 (top left) too pinkish rather than blue; p. 141 (top) overly blue rather than purplish or pinkish; p. 143 (top) not blue enough; p. 155 (top) abnormally bluish rather than pinkish-white; p. 170 (top left) overly pinkish rather than more blue.

While good, well-reproduced color photographs are probably the best way to convey the impression of the living plants as they actually occur in nature, there are certain persistent problems with the use of photographs rather than drawings for illustrating plants. These problems include: (1) the limited camera depth of field which normally does not allow for a sharp focussing on all diagnostically important plant parts (e.g. foliage characteristics unclear when the flowers are the objects of focus, and actual interconnections between plant parts often obscure), (2) a morass of overlying plant parts which may hide taxonomically important characters, (3) parts of closely associated plant species which may not appear separate, and (4) confusing size distortions which may be apparent. While the present authors have succeeded much better than most in overcoming these common difficulties (especially the first), all do





Western Red Lily

Fenton R. Var

remain at least to some degree. It would have been desirable if the authors had inserted a measurement scale with each picture to allow for size estimates. Although the text does include detailed measurements for the described species, there are many inserted photographs of species which are not so described. Readers may encounter some confusion in knowing for certain which foliage belongs to the species in question, for example, in the photographs of white water crowfoot (top, p. 49), western Canada violet (bottom, p. 97), and twin flower (bottom, p. 155).

Supplementary line drawings can be used effectively to clarify or amplify details of plants not readily shown on photographs, and this the authors have judiciously attempted to do. However, in marked contrast to

the photographs, I find the line drawings in this book a considerable disappointment. Most of the drawings are really not very enlightening in regard to a better clarification of the floral structure, often showing even less detail than do the photographs. The diagnostically important number and nature of the stamens and pistils are often omitted or very unclearly shown, and even petal and sepal shapes, positions, and fusions are often distorted. In some cases I believe the line drawings to be potentially misleading to readers, such as those on pages 29, 34, 36, 46, 51, 55, 56, 57, 70, 71, 79, 84, 93, 110, 147, 148, 158, and 160. The drawing "western dock" (p. 34) shows strongly toothed fruiting perianth valves (seeds as here called) which are m



ely those of "field dock", *Rumex*  
*nophyllus*.

The authors should be con-  
tulated for the well-presented for-  
t, combining on a single page the  
cellent color photographs of the  
d flower species with the concise,  
ormative, and easily readable tex-  
l descriptions and comments. A  
sonable attempt seems to have  
en made to simplify botanical ter-  
nology, but without going to the  
reme too often seen in layman-  
el natural history books where  
er-simplification has been accom-  
nied by a serious loss of accuracy  
d precision. Instead a useful  
ssary of terms has been appended  
(p. 196-198), which is supplemented  
h labelled figure drawings (pp. 3-7)  
leaf, inflorescence, and flower  
es and features reprinted from  
dd and Best (1964). Unfortunately,  
me of the glossary definitions  
bear inadequate, misleading, or  
en in error, including those for the  
owing terms: barb, carpel, hip,  
e, oblanceolate, ovary, panicle,  
nose, pome, and trifoliate. For the  
st part the actual species descrip-  
ns have been very well done,  
hough a few errors were noticed —  
there are far more than 3 or 4  
pels (= simple pistils) in the  
tillate flowers of arrowhead (p. 10).

With the species descriptions, short  
mments are included on habitats,  
neral distribution in the area, abun-  
nce, and phenology. Also various  
eresting notes have at times been  
erted concerning plant usages (e.g.  
ry edibility, tea or wine produc-  
n, etc.), poisonous attributes,  
hetic qualities, name histories,  
y, which should serve to whet  
ny readers' appetites for more  
nowledge about these wild flowers.  
 indication of species' rarity or  
eatened survival has sometimes  
en given also, along with a conser-  
onist's exhortation "to enjoy and  
destroy." However, except for  
hids, relatively few of our en-  
gered flowering plant species  
e been included in this book. In  
ard to the text format, the reader  
uld note that anywhere within a

species description, a brief con-  
trasting sentence about another  
related species may have been in-  
serted, but that the continuing  
description still refers to the original  
species and not to the inserted one.  
Also the most prominent photograph  
on a page may not necessarily be of  
the described species, but of a related  
one referred to briefly in the text.

Certain distribution statements  
given by the authors seem  
questionable. To my knowledge,  
*Cypripedium reginae* (p. 27) has  
never been verified for  
Saskatchewan, either past or present;  
*Spiranthes cernua* (p. 29) is recorded  
no nearer to the Canadian prairies  
than southeastern North Dakota;  
*Habenaria orbiculata* (p. 28) is hardly  
considered common in aspen  
parkland edges and the boreal forest;  
and the butterwort species (p. 151)  
occurring in the Cypress Hills and on  
the prairies has been considered to  
be *Pinguicula vulgaris*, with *P.*  
*macroceras* limited to the  
southwestern Alberta foothills. Also I  
would question that certain species  
are as wide-ranging or apparently  
frequent as indicated by the authors  
— for example "lady's thumb" (p. 33;  
also the identification of photograph  
seems questionable), "purple  
clematis" (p. 45), "wild white ger-  
anium" (p. 88), "fringed gentians" (p.  
130), "dwarf bilberry" (p. 124),  
"showy milkweed" (p. 133), "scarlet  
paintbrush" (p. 146; also the top  
photograph seems more likely to be  
the "red Indian paintbrush"), "heart-  
leaved arnica" (p. 169), and  
*Hymenoxys richardsonii* (p. 185). On  
the other hand certain species have a  
wider distribution or frequency than  
apparently ascribed by the authors,  
including "cream-colored vetchling"  
(p. 78), which appears almost equally  
common eastward, "silverberry" (p.  
101), which becomes even more fre-  
quent northward, "red Indian paint-  
brush" (p. 146) which is our most  
wide-spread paintbrush species and  
not limited to the Cypress Hills, and  
"Canada goldenrod" (p. 193), which  
seems equally as abundant westward  
as eastward.



## CRIDDLE — DE — DIDDLE — ENSIS

ALMA CRIDDLE. 1973. Published by Alma Criddle, 19 - 303 Furby St., Winnipeg, Man. R3C 2A8. 288 pp. \$8.00

In my youth, I heard the Criddle name mentioned in tones of awe such people as Mrs. Priestly and A. Lawrence. Later, I read many important contributions to natural history written by Norman and Stuart Criddle. I was therefore overjoyed to learn that a book-length biography of the Criddle family had been published.

Percy Criddle settled near the Assiniboine River, 25 miles south of Brandon, in 1882. At 38 years of age, like many other pioneers, he knew almost nothing about farming. Fortunately, he was strong; or, perhaps, Percy walked 50 miles to and from Brandon in just over 15 hours.

Percy brought from England a legal wife and four young children between two and seven years, and a former mistress and their five children between eight and 13 years. The two families formed one menage, the children totally unaware of the blood relationship until many years later. Percy's two women and 30 children represented many mouths to feed but also a potential labour force which he used to advantage.

Few pioneers kept such a comprehensive diary, and perhaps no other family had such an interesting story to tell. Percy was a man of many accomplishments and wide interests, educated at Heidelberg University, the son of accomplished artists, and was himself well-trained in music, a talented organist with a fine tenor voice. Percy became the local Justice of the Peace and Game Guardian. He also served as the local expert in fields as diverse as astronomy, natural history, law, medicine, music and sport.

The Criddles built a cricket pitch, four grass tennis courts, a nine-hole

There are a few questionable identifications of the plants pictured, although verification of such determinations from photographs alone is often difficult. The photograph labelled "hedge bindweed" (top, p. 134) appears more likely to be "field bindweed" (*Convolvulus arvensis*), and why is the lower right photograph labelled "wild morning glory", another name for the same species, *C. sepium*, as "hedge bindweed"? The taxon represented by the photographed plant called *Castilleja acuminata* (lower right, p. 146) seems uncertain, but perhaps it is the white-inflorescence form of *C. coccinea*. Other questionable identifications include the following: "smooth fleabane" (lower left, p. 179) which could well be "rough fleabane", *Erigeron asper*, instead; "thin-leaved snowberry" (top right, p. 156) which at the least is certainly atypical with such coarsely toothed leaves; and "silvery groundsel", *Senecio canus* (lower right, p. 191) where the grayish leaves at the base uncertainly belong to this plant.

While I have attempted to point out some of the various technical flaws for the readers' benefit, these are indeed relatively minor and do not detract substantially from the overall impressive quality of this volume. The book is well-edited with few spelling and grammatical errors noted. Its 5½" x 8½" dimensions should make for handy field use, although the binding of the paperback edition seems unlikely to hold up well under rough usage. In conclusion, I would highly recommend the book for anyone with an interest in the prairie flora or general natural history, and equally for all levels, from elementary school children to adults, and from inexperienced nature-lovers to professional botanists. The price is surprisingly low when one considers that there are several color reproductions on almost every page. Can any prairie naturalist afford not to obtain a copy of this book? — Vernon L. Harms, Fraser Herbarium, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon.