

WEEDS OF CANADA AND THE NORTHERN UNITED STATES

France Royer and Richard Dickinson. 1999. The University of Alberta Press / Lone Pine Publishing, 434 pp. Soft cover \$29.95 ISBN 0-88864-311-X

Here's a fine addition to a botany library – one of the best guides I've seen for identifying weedy plant species. A bonus for us, the Prairie Provinces are right near the middle of the area covered: Alaska to Newfoundland, south to northern California and Virginia.

Which species are branded as "weeds"? The authors' definition is "any plant growing in an area where it is not wanted." For this book they have chosen common, widely distributed species. Other factors affecting their choices include potential for future problems and official weed designation. The result is coverage of 175 species in 48 families.

The book has two parts; the first section consists of pictorial keys which direct users to the species descriptions in the second section. The keys are for mature plants, seedlings, and grasses. All are based on simple leaf arrangements and structures, followed by thumbnail photos showing flowers or whole plants. Mature plants are also keyed by flower colour which is coded on the edges of the pages of the key.

The descriptive text section is arranged alphabetically by English name of the plant families. Each family has a 2-page general description and is assigned a colour which flags the pages featuring members of that family. Species are arranged within the family alphabetically

by scientific name. Each species has two facing pages where concise and thorough information is laid out. The common name is given, followed by the scientific name (with synonyms for both), as well as French names. Quick identification features highlight what to look for right away, then there are detailed descriptions, including photos, of seeds, seedling, leaves, flower, plant and fruit structures. Distribution information includes where, within a plant's geographic range, it is officially designated a noxious weed. There are explanations of the plant's weediness, including information on toxicity. A very useful feature is the description of similar species that are not necessarily weeds.

The book is useable by everyone from a novice gardener to an experienced botanist. Information is accessible to someone scanning the book to identify a problem plant as well as the person wanting a detailed description of a particular species. A good straightforward, illustrated glossary at the back explains unfamiliar terms. The bibliography covers books on weeds, publications on specific weeds, and general species guides. A single index enables a person to find a plant by common English, scientific, or French names.

A lot of careful thought went into the layout and production of this book, from

the 750 superb photos to the handy little ruler (Imperial and metric) on the plasticized back cover. Try it; I think you'll like it.

Reviewed by Judy Haraldson, W.P. Fraser Herbarium, Dept. of Plant Sciences, University of Saskatchewan. Available from the Blue Jay Bookshop.

BIRDS AT YOUR FEEDER: A GUIDE TO FEEDING HABITS, BEHAVIOR, DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE

Erica H. Dunn and Diane L. Tessaglia-Hymes. 1999. W. W. Norton, New York. 418 pp. Illus. 200 x 120 cm. Hard cover \$42.00. ISBN 0-393-04737-7.

This book summarizes information derived from Project Feederwatch, a continent-wide survey by feeder watchers that began in 1987. In 1994, the year used as the basis of the book's maps, nearly 6000 volunteers recorded, for two days every two weeks from November until early April, the numbers of birds seen at his or her feeder.

Ottawa's Ricky Dunn and her co-author concentrate on the 88 species, 38 of which occur in Saskatchewan, that visit ten percent or more of the feeders in any of the eight continental regions. Another 80 species, 52 of which occur in Saskatchewan, have been recorded less commonly and do not merit a full species account. There is also a list of mammals which visit feeders, either to share the bird feed or to eat the birds themselves!

Coverage of each species includes background on the history, behaviour, foraging habits (including caching), habitat, and physiology. For each species, favourite foods are listed and a graph depicts the mean number of birds present, the number of periods they are present, and the months when they most often occur. Two informative maps for each species depict abundance and the percent of feeders visited, and alone

justify purchase of this book. The Slate-colored Junco is the most widely distributed species, visiting over 80% of feeders across the continent.

Fascinating tidbits of information abound. Anna's Hummingbirds lose weight on sugar water alone, so require protein from the equivalent of 38 tiny flies each day. One Evening Grosbeak downed 96 sunflower seeds in less than five minutes, and a flock of 100 consumed the contents of a 50-pound bag in 18 days; in summer one grosbeak will eat a thousand budworm larvae per day. One Chipping Sparrow will consume 2 1/4 pounds of seeds during one winter, sixty times its body weight. Boreal Chickadees may cache surplus food, for the short term, in camouflaged sites on the under sides of a branch, while Red-breasted Nuthatches cache seeds in crevices on tree trunks. Clark's Nutcrackers and Pinyon Jays, on the other hand, may hide thousands of seeds for use months later.

The Mourning Dove, if it has a plentiful supply of water, can tolerate a body temperature of 113° F. A Brown-headed Nuthatch may use a loose scale of bark to pry up other bits of bark. An American Tree Sparrow returned to the same wintering area for eight consecutive