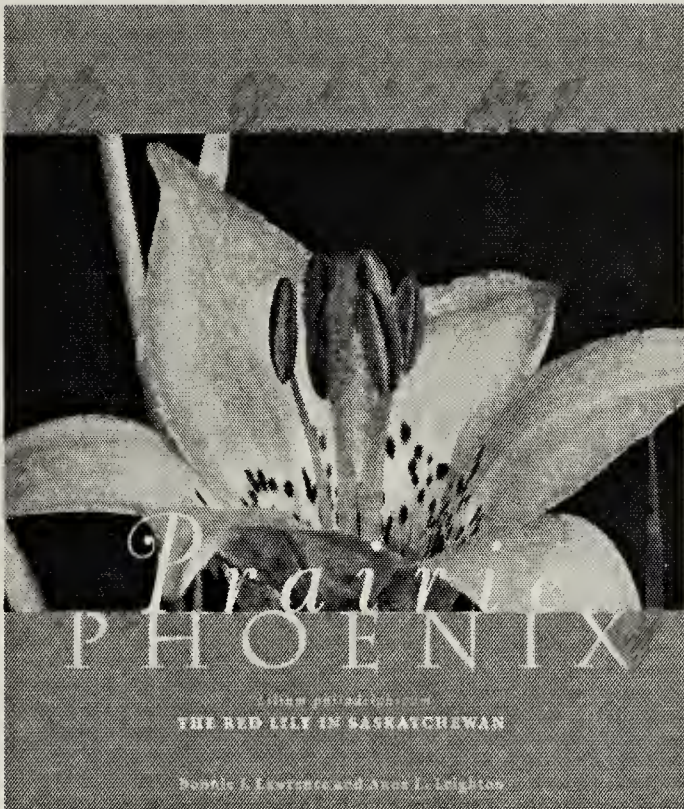


PRAIRIE PHOENIX: THE RED LILY, *Lilium philadelphicum*, IN SASKATCHEWAN

Bonnie J. Lawrence and Anna L. Leighton. 2005. Nature Saskatchewan Special Publication No. 25. 139 pp. 24.95 Can. Softcover 21.5 x 25.3 cm, (8.5 x 10 inches).



At first glance, the large format and plethora of photographs in this book lead one to believe that it might be what is commonly referred to as a “coffee table” book, the kind that you can flip through idly as you converse with friends or watch the TV news. But those books favor titillating the visual sense over providing an educational experience and this book definitely does not fit that category. Skimming through the table of contents is enough to convince you that you are in for a treat, a magical mixture of myth, fiction and scientific facts presented with a writing style that in places reads like poetry.

As the culmination of more than a decade of direct study and the accumulation of in excess of a century of anecdotal and scientific literature, the book is an ecological treatise. It takes the reader from details of anatomical structure through phases of growth, and provides information on range, habitats, associated species and interactions with other components of the lily’s ecosystem. It is a treat to learn not only about the hidden secrets of the lily’s life history, but also about the habits of the animal life with which it shares space, both underneath the ground and above it.

The photographs, illustrations and figures throughout the book are superb, with the names of many of our well-known naturalists represented in the photo credits, supporting and enhancing the excellent material obtained by the authors. Is it any wonder that we can never tire of seeking out the lilies every summer just to absorb a little of their beauty into our own souls?

Even in this day of computer spelling and grammatical checks it is unusual to find a book as free of errors as this one. I noticed no spelling errors and in only a few places did I find the wording awkward or wonder if another word might have been more fitting. I

chuckled over the description of a township's fabric as containing rectangles "1 mile wide and 2 miles high" as definitely being the mind set of a map user rather than someone visualizing the survey on the ground where wide and high have quite definitely different meanings. The quality of the text in this book speaks to the care and dedication of the authors. To produce a book that has so little of which anyone can be critical is a worthy achievement and this one is a true work of art.

The large format of the book does not lend itself to bedtime reading, and the arthritic might prefer a smaller page to the white space in the book, but the page size does allow one to see in greater clarity the detail of the images. I thought at first the alternate color of the text was being used to pick out quotes, but that does not follow through the whole book so perhaps it was meant only to draw attention to certain passages. I puzzle over the inference that the protection clause of the legislation was only added with the 1981 Act, for I recall an overwhelming sense of guilt that I was breaking a law when trying to salvage lilies from the ditches of a road allowance being upgraded in the mid-1960s. I see as an avenue of research for someone interested in genetics the observation that "Something to look for on hillsides frequented by butterflies is a greater range of flower colour variation as a result of extensive cross-pollination by these insects." It would seem the authors are not in favor of the legislation presented on page 130 in that, on page 135, the inference is that only the landowner's permission is

required when collecting seeds which is in fact picking a part of the plant, a contravention of the Act. Those who collect and grow the seeds for sale as a business are engaged in the carrying out of their occupation, but private individuals who collect for their own gardens are in contravention of the Act.

I found only two errors in the book, and two others were pointed out to me. On page 131 the scientific name for Thorny Buffaloberry is given as *Shepherdia canadensis* when it should be *Shepherdia argentea*. Similarly, Chokecherry is not *Prunus pensylvanica* (Pincherry) but *Prunus virginiana*. The suffix on the species name for Little Bluestem should match the genus name as *Andropogon scoparius*, formerly, and as *Schizachyrium scoparium*, the currently accepted name. On page 132 the kirigami illustrated instruction step 3 states fold AC over to AB which is not quite correct and better expressed in the step 3, found in the text above.

Published in the year of the Saskatchewan Centennial in 2005, this book is a fitting tribute to the provincial floral emblem. We must take up the challenge of its final pages to ensure that this lily continues to thrive in natural habitats throughout its range and that its apparent expansion into boreal areas does not follow the pattern of the Greater Prairie Chicken, which expanded its range with settlement into Saskatchewan, but is now extirpated here.

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