

BOOK REVIEW

DEXTER PEACOCK AND FORREST S. SMITH. 2019. **A Photographic Guide to the Vegetation of the South Texas Sand Sheet.** (ISBN-13: 978-1-62349-782-8, flexbind). Texas A&M University Press, John H. Lindsey Building, 4354 Lewis St., College Station, Texas 77843-4354, U.S.A. (Orders: tamupress.com, 1-800-826-8911). \$30.00 US, 248 pp., 365 color photos, bibliography, index, 7" × 10".

The South Texas Sand Sheet, also referred to as the Coastal Sand Plain and Llano Mesteño, is a distinctive region characterized by extensive, deep eolian sand deposits and constantly shifting dunes ranging from nearly level, to undulating, to moderately steep. It sprawls across more than 2 million semi-arid acres in all or parts of nine South Texas counties and is home to an overwhelming diversity of vegetation in this transitional zone between the brush country to the north and west, the coastal prairies and marshes to the east, and the sub-tropical region to the south. It is influenced to some extent by each of those surrounding vegetation zones, but the Sand Sheet stubbornly maintains its own distinctive character that sets it apart from the other regions.

This book is the first plant guide specifically developed for the South Texas Sand Sheet. It includes photographs, descriptions, and general information on more than 200 of the most significant, representative, and iconic plant species and/or groupings of the region. Some 56 of those species are endemic to Texas, and at least 15 of them are found only in the Sand Sheet region. The dynamic nature of the vegetation is due to the relative instability of the windblown soils as well as the erratic precipitation patterns and often extreme rainfall events of the region.

Some of the largest and most historic ranches in Texas and the nation are found in this area. They remain largely intact resulting from ownership and stewardship by multiple generations of the same family, some dating back over 300 years. These vast ranches with their unfragmented habitats are a major reason that these native species and diverse plant communities remain.

One of the greatest achievements and most appealing qualities of the book is that is not only easily understood, it is an extremely practical, everyday reference for those who own and manage the land. It is intended to be a constant companion and a well-used field guide primarily for landowners, students, wildflower enthusiasts, and those who have an interest in vegetation but may not have formal botanical education or training.

As such, it is organized differently than most other plant identification books. Organization is first by plant categories and then by visual characteristics. Broad categories include flowering herbaceous plants, grasses, shrubs, trees, cacti, yuccas, and vines. Within some of the categories there are sub-categories based on growth form, flower size, shape, color, and other visual characteristics that are easily recognizable and useful for identification in the field.

Another unique aspect of the book of this flexbound book is that names of plants not only include the scientific name and localized common name(s), but also the Spanish name for many species. All of these elements are professionally and seamlessly combined into *A Photographic Guide to the Vegetation of the South Texas Sand Sheet*, making it a handy guide for those with an interest in learning more about the vegetation of this unusual region of Texas.—Dan Caudle, Resident Research Associate, Botanical Research Institute of Texas, Fort Worth, Texas, U.S.A.

BOOK NOTICES

DAN DOURSON AND JUDY DOURSON. 2019. **Wildflowers and Ferns of Red River Gorge and the Greater Red River Basin.** (ISBN-13: 978-1-94966900-8, pbk). The University Press of Kentucky, 663 South Limestone Street, Lexington, Kentucky 40508-4008, U.S.A. (Orders: kentuckypress.com). \$39.95 US, 488 pp., 815 color photos, 68 line drawings, 8 figures, bibliography, index, 6" × 9".

DONALD J. LEOPOLD AND LYTTON JOHN MUSSELMAN. 2020. **Wildflowers of the Adirondacks.** (ISBN-13: 978-1-42143110-9, pbk). Johns Hopkins University Press, 2715 North Charles Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21218-4363, U.S.A. (Orders: press.jhu.edu). \$24.95 US, 368 pp., 315 color illustrations, references, index, 5½" × 8½".