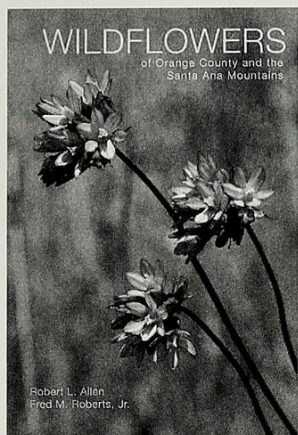


REVIEW



Wildflowers of Orange County and the Santa Ana Mountains. By ROBERT L. ALLEN AND FRED M. ROBERTS JR. 2013. Laguna Wilderness Press, Laguna, CA. 497 pp. ISBN 978-0-9840007-1-5. Price \$35.00, paperback

This is a remarkable publication representing a love of nature and a dedication to sharing it. The authors have assembled an information-rich guide that is profusely illustrated with diagrams, maps, and attractive and informative photographs. It is far more than a wildflower guide. The authors “know” Orange County and the Santa Ana Mountains region and they lovingly describe its special places, its plant life, and some of its wildlife. The introductory chapter includes engaging discussions of the geology and geography of the region, plant features, plant classification, plant names, and plant communities. A section on Watching Wildflowers includes practical tips for observing, documenting, photographing, drawing, and gardening with wildflowers plus safety tips for the outdoors. One thing I would like to have seen in the introduction is a discussion of the authors’ criteria for deciding what to include or exclude; cattails, for instance are included as wildflowers whereas rushes, with more readily recognizable floral structures, are not. I wondered about some other inclusions or exclusions as well.

The book is up-to-date, following modern classifications of major plant groups and is aligned for the most part with the second edition of the Jepson Manual (Baldwin et al. 2012). Although the arrangement of taxa within major groups is mostly alphabetical the authors have, in some cases, grouped morphologically similar genera to make comparisons easier. Plant descriptions are provided at various taxonomic levels along with habitat and locality information and natural history notes. The book does not include taxonomic keys, so identifications may be a challenge to users without an acquaintance with plant families.

Scientific names used in the book are, for the most part, in agreement with those in the Jepson

Manual. No standardization exists, however, for common names, and thus the choice of which common names to present to the public is a challenge to authors of a book of this nature. I noted various instances where the authors and I differ in our preferred common names. In some instances the authors include more than one common name for a species. Because of the negative connotation that may accompany the word weed, the authors have avoided many common names incorporating this word—thus tarweeds become tarplants, pygmyweeds become pygmy stonecrops, etc. Common chickweed—which is indeed a weed—is unchanged. The authors provide etymologies for specific epithets and for some generic names.

An unexpected, unadvertised, and most informative feature of this book is the description of guilds of animals, especially insects, that are associated with particular species or groups of plants. These are accompanied by excellent photos—often stunning close-ups of insects and informative discussions. Scientific and common names are provided for the animals along with descriptions of their interactions with the plants and other natural history notes.

Following the taxonomic treatments of plants and the occasional animal guild is a discussion of Where to go Wildflower Watching. This includes maps and directions plus highlights of what may be observed. In such an urbanized area it is very useful to discover that there are so many special places to see wildflowers and other natural features.

End matters include a detailed list of references used in preparation of the guide, a glossary, an index to common and scientific names of plants and animals, and an index to plant common names organized by flower color.

I look forward to using this book, and I highly recommend it. The authors are to be congratulated on an outstanding achievement.

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