

land stewardship, especially as the demographics of land ownership change over to city dwellers. The book's initial historical focus, along with colorful photography and insightful essays and passages offered by a variety of notable environmental advocates—some, like Aldo Leopold, native Iowans—engagingly urge a different way of perceiving landscape. "Step knowingly!" (53) writer Michael Carey lovingly recalls his uncle, a career farmer, recommending to his nephew. A light but thorough overview of the history of Iowa's land for general readers, this book likewise gently introduces the idea that the land's appearance documents layers and layers of the history of human use—a palimpsest of land-use values—whose awareness crucially requires more careful cultivation.

The Nature of Nebraska: Ecology and Biodiversity, by Paul A. Johnsgard. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001. xxviii, 402 pp. Illustrations, maps, tables, appendixes, glossary, references, index. \$29.95 cloth.

Reviewer John Pearson is an ecologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. He is coauthor with Ruth Herzberg of *The Guide to Iowa's State Preserves*.

The Nature of Nebraska takes an "ecoregion" approach to the natural history of the state of Nebraska. Part one is a statewide overview of Nebraska's eight ecological regions ("ecoregions"). Part two delves into more detail with individual chapters for each ecoregion. In each chapter, there are sections devoted to major terrestrial communities (such as "dune prairie" and "sandsage prairie" in the Nebraska Sandhills), profiles of typical species, and vignettes of endangered species. Part three provides checklists for flora and fauna, a guide to natural areas, and indexes to articles in *Nebraska State Museum Notes* and *Nebraskaland*. A glossary, bibliography, and index complete the book. The author's exquisite drawings illustrate numerous plants and animals.

This book will help to dispel the stereotype of Nebraska as a flatland of endless cornfields. Armed with *The Nature of Nebraska*, any traveler willing to venture off of monotonous Interstate 80 will be informatively guided to the intriguing landscapes of the Pine Ridge Escarpment, the High Plains, the Loess Hills, the Nebraska Sandhills, the Niobrara Valley, the Eastern Glaciated Plains, and the Missouri Valley. Even the agriculturally dominated Platte Valley (the narrow cornbelt traversed by I-80) is shown to be ecologically interesting. Naturalists in states surrounding Nebraska can learn more of the ecology of their own places by reading about the ecoregions that straddle the political boundary. Iowans, for example, will better appreciate their tallgrass prairies by reading about Nebraska's Eastern Glaciated Plains, which

are an ecological extension of Iowa. All readers will find that *The Nature of Nebraska* stirs appreciation for the need to protect dwindling natural habitats.

Minnesota, Real and Imagined: Essays on the State and Its Culture, edited by Stephen R. Graubard. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2001. xi, 297 pp. Graphs, maps, notes, index. \$14.95 paper.

Reviewer Kristin Elmquist is a high school social studies teacher in Minnesota. Her background is in anthropology and immigration history, and her work currently involves video making with new immigrant students in Minneapolis.

Minnesota, Real and Imagined was originally published in 2000 as a volume of *Daedalus*, the journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. By examining one state from multidisciplinary perspectives, this book attempts to pin down what this state *means*—to those who live here and to those who live outside the state. As an icon of “mid-westernness,” Minnesota evokes images of lakeside cabins, family farms, and accented Scandinavians. However, the realities of contemporary Minnesota life, from the Mall of America to the depopulation of the countryside, contradict those iconic images. Each essay illustrates one aspect of Minnesota life or history. Together, they reveal the patterns and contradictions embodied in the construction known as *Minnesota*.

Several essays in the collection take in part a historical view. A broad, comprehensive overview of the state’s social history gets the volume off to an excellent start and establishes a helpful context for what follows. Other essays have a more specific historical focus, describing the lives of notable Minnesotans of the past or surveying religious life in the state and its context within the waves of immigration that helped shape Minnesota’s culture. Other essays focus on geography, with one essay examining how the location and terrain of the state has shaped the lives of its people, and another looking at outdoor recreation and how the landscape and climate shape Minnesota natives’ views of themselves and their state. Another essay takes a critical look at what Minnesota—as an idea—means, how perceptions of this place were shaped, and how those perceptions may contradict the realities of what is happening to the rural landscapes. Some authors view the state through the prism of its distinctive political culture. These contributions include a survey of Minnesota politics and an analysis of the strange place held by Governor Jesse Ventura in state politics. Another describes Minnesota’s contradictory relationship to the larger world—its contemporary international focus and its isola-

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