

Gladys Black: The Legacy of Iowa's Bird Lady, by Larry A. Stone and Jon W. Stravers. Elkader: Turkey River Environmental Expressions, 2010. x, 147 pp. Illustrations. \$19.00 paper.

Reviewer Holly Carver recently retired as director of the University of Iowa Press.

Larry Stone spent 25 years as the outdoor writer for the *Des Moines Register*, and Jon Stravers has been monitoring raptor nesting and migration research along the Mississippi River for more than 30 years; together they possess a deep knowledge of Iowa's natural communities. Coauthors of *Sylvan T. Runkel: Citizen of the Natural World*, they have now collaborated on a biography of another influential naturalist: Gladys Black (1909–1998), sometimes known as Iowa's Rachel Carson. Their engaging, energetic text — based on Black's personal papers, letters, photos, and other memorabilia at the State Historical Society of Iowa; on interviews with relatives, colleagues, and friends; and on quotes from Gladys's *Des Moines Register* columns — blends anecdotes from the wide variety of people who knew Gladys with a more straightforward biographical narrative.

Gladys (after reading this book, you will always think of her as Gladys) was born on a farm five miles east of Pleasantville, southeast of Des Moines; she lived much of her life within sight of the Red Rock bluffs. She became a public health nurse in the 1930s. For her, public health was not confined to human health. By the mid-1950s, she had become a fervent activist dedicated to improving the health of Iowa's natural heritage, with a special emphasis on the state's birdlife. Given the dire condition of Iowa's air, soil, and water in the days when DDT and other pesticides were commonly used, she found much to contend with.

Eccentric and passionate, uninhibited and unconventional, purpose-driven and persistent, Gladys campaigned endlessly in print and in person in support of environmental education, wildlife conservation, and habitat preservation. In the mid-1960s, she became a wildlife rehabilitator, using the injured birds she rescued as part of the many educational programs she gave. In the 1970s she lobbied successfully to ban dove hunting in Iowa. And from 1969 to 1987, she captured the attention of lay readers across the state through her newspaper columns in the *Des Moines Register*, giving avian and other wildlife enthusiasts a consistent and compelling voice.

Stone and Stravers knew and respected Gladys, and they are not at all objective when it comes to extolling her accomplishments. Rather than being hagiographic, however, their text conveys a convincing sincerity that establishes Gladys as a particularly important member of

Iowa's coterie of influential female naturalists, including Ada Hayden, Althea Sherman, and Lois Tiffany. Gladys's knowledge and dedication outweighed her idiosyncrasies (indeed, her idiosyncrasies enhanced her effectiveness, allowing her an informal freedom that captivated everyone she encountered), and the authors have been particularly successful at providing anecdotes that illuminate Gladys's character without caricaturing her.

More than a collection of entertaining stories, the first-person accounts in this lively book convey the strength of the connections that Gladys was able to build, and the entire book has a real-time feeling that allows readers to understand how one person can make a vast and positive difference to her world. Anyone interested in nature and the environment, community activism, and the history of conservation in the Midwest will find much to admire in this book.

The Mississippi: A Visual Biography, by Quinta Scott. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2010. x, 404 pp. Illustrations (many in color), maps, bibliography, index. \$75.00 cloth.

Reviewer John O. Anfinson is chief of resource management for the National Park Service's Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. He is the author of *The River We Have Wrought: A History of the Upper Mississippi* (2003).

Quinta Scott has written an encyclopedic introduction to the Mississippi River, from Lake Itasca to the Gulf of Mexico and from its geologic origins through the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. She does this in two parts. The first is a narrative covering the river's physical origins and the history of human meddling with the river's natural character. At 107 pages, this part constitutes just under one-third of the book. Two hundred color photographs, with captions, and occasional one- to three-page essays make up the second part.

Scott provides no introduction to the book explaining her purpose or objectives. They are revealed by what she includes and what she leaves out. In both sections, she documents the ways humans — the Corps of Engineers, in particular — have changed the river and how most of those changes have harmed the river's ecosystems. Through her many images of backwater channels, sloughs, wetlands, bayous, and wildlife refuges, she highlights that damage and the efforts to preserve and restore native habitat. In both parts, she emphasizes the loss of floodplain and coastal wetlands, bottomland forests, and natural flow regimes and the consequences for the river and humans.

As if disgusted by their presence, Scott offers no pictures of the massive navigation and flood control projects she blames for destroying