Book Reviews and Notices

Tending Iowa's Land: Pathways to a Sustainable Future, edited by Cornelia F. Mutel. Bur Oak Books. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2023. xvii, 278 pp. Notes, index. $25.00 paperback.

Reviewer Cori Jakubiak is associate professor of education and Director of the Center for Prairie Studies at Grinnell College. Her interests include issues of ecological and social justice in addition to English language learning and world language education.

Suffused through Cornelia Mutel's new edited collection is a profound love of Iowa. While the volume's 29 contributors all outline deep problems with Iowa's current ecological health, the book as a whole is a paean for those Iowa citizens, recreationists, landowners, farmers, researchers, and policymakers who are working to restore the state's formerly bountiful natural ecosystems. By offering concrete ways to address the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services that accompany intensive agriculture, Mutel's book—true to its name—charts a hopeful course toward a more sustainable Iowa.

After providing a short introduction and outlining the history of Iowa's human-changed landscape, Mutel organizes the book into four thematic sections: "Soil," "Water," "Air," and "Life." Each section addresses a corresponding environmental problem: "degraded soils, polluted and flooding waters, climate change, and the loss of biodiversity" (xii), all of which have been exacerbated by Iowa's "simplified and tightly managed" landscape (xi). Embedded in each of these thematic sections are four chapters by well-regarded Iowa scholars. These scholars' contributions use scientifically based research to provide overviews of topics including, but not limited to, soil health and erosion, concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), regenerative agriculture, water pollutants, flooding, Iowa's climate future, and reduced species diversity. The last of the four scientific chapters in each section is subtitled, "A Vision for the Future." In these section-concluding chapters, the respective contributors offer empirically supported suggestions for mitigating the environmental challenges described in the book.

The four thematic sections also include three personal stories apiece. These shorter, first-person narratives augment the more empirical chapters and reflect the perspectives of those whom Mutel calls ordinary "environmental heroes" (xiii). In using this descriptor, Mutel tips her hat to those Iowans who have taken direct action to address the

state's serious environmental problems. These personal stories thus shed intimate light on the challenges and joys of initiatives like altering one's own land use practices to reduce soil erosion and sequester carbon, organizing river clean-up days, developing Clean Energy Districts, educating others about fens, and cofounding a wildlife rehabilitation center, among many others.

The book concludes with a "Call to Action" by University of Iowa professor Jerald L. Schnoor. Despite the serious environmental challenges that the book unflinchingly lays out, Schnoor's chapter urges readers to take heart and grasp the potential of this moment. Schnoor writes: "Iowans have a unique opportunity and an obligation to succeed with regenerative agriculture, to slow and infiltrate our rainfall, to incorporate atmospheric carbon into our soil, to enhance our landscape's native biodiversity, and to export all that we learn to our global community" (260). In that sense, Mutel's edited volume concludes by urging readers not only to enact and support the strategies outlined in the book but also to see themselves as the vanguard of a renewed land ethic, following Aldo Leopold.

Written in an accessible style, the chapters in this edited collection provide an excellent, if not worrisome, account of Iowa's most pressing environmental problems. Even readers who lack natural science backgrounds will be able make sense of the material, which renders the book's accessibility among its greatest strengths. A "clarion call for the systemic transformation of our uses of Iowa's soil, water, air, and biodiversity" (257), this volume makes it clear that both political will and scientific data are needed to improve the state's ecological health. With its sense of wistful possibility and nod to many kinds of readers, Mutel's book is certain to recruit more Iowans to this cause.

Illinois Trails and Traces: Portraits and Stories along the State's Historic Routes, text by Gary Marx, photographs by Daniel Overturf. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2022. xiii, 266 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. $29.95 paperback.

Reviewer Michael Plummer is Historic Sites Manager with the State Historical Society of Iowa. A graduate of Loyola University Maryland and the University of Vermont, his career has included roles in public history, historic preservation, and facilities management.

Author Gary Marx and photographer Daniel Overturf guide readers of *Illinois Trails and Traces* on an exploration of the pathways that have shaped Illinois. Through Marx's well-researched and insightful text and