

Book Reviews and Notices

The Emerald Horizon: The History of Nature in Iowa, by Cornelia F. Mutel. A Bur Oak Book. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2008. xviii, 297 pp. Line drawings by Mark Müller, color and black-and-white photographs by Carl Kurtz, maps, tables, appendix of plant names, notes, bibliography, index. \$27.50 paper.

Reviewer Rebecca Conard is professor of history and public history at Middle Tennessee State University. She is the author of *Places of Quiet Beauty: Parks, Preserves, and Environmentalism* (1997).

Cornelia Mutel gently lays out her reason for writing *The Emerald Horizon* in her prologue, but she really trips the reader's mental hammer in chapter three by stating starkly that "the agricultural conversion of North America's tallgrass prairie has been called the most rapid and complete ecological transformation in Earth's history" (77). Four-fifths of Iowa was once tallgrass prairie, with the other fifth in oak savannas and woodlands. Mutel repeatedly drives home the ecological implications of that transformation. Her central message is that the imposition of an industrialized agricultural regime in the twentieth century, coupled with increasing urban pressures on the land, threatens to undermine the last vestiges of Iowa's pre-Euro-American settlement landscape, but it is not too late to halt ecological devastation. As the title suggests, she ends the book with a positive challenge to Iowans.

After a very brief overview of "land and life" patterns from pre-historic indigenous peoples to the present, in chapter two Mutel gives us a wonderfully clear, compact explanation of Iowa's prairie types, hydrology, and related species of flora and fauna. In chapter three, "The Great Transformation," she recounts the processes by which native species were removed by traders, trappers, and farmers, who responded to economic opportunities and market demands in a land of abundance nurtured by some of the richest soil on earth. In chapters four and five she tackles the present status of Iowa's vestigial prairies, wetlands, and oak woodlands as well as native fishes, water birds, mammals, grasses, and wildflowers. Mutel chose to forgo discussions of aquatic ecosystems and water quality in order to devote the last two chapters to the "emerald horizon" – what it will take to restore native species and ecological processes to sustainable health, and strategies for preserving and restoring remnants of native natural communities

as well as integrating re-created communities into working landscapes, both agricultural and urban.

Like the natural scientists of the past whom she quotes—Thomas Macbride, Bohumil Shimek, and Louis Pammel—Mutel is a hopeful realist. She does not underestimate the magnitude of a second transformation, as the statistics sprinkled throughout the book attest. For instance, nearly one-quarter of Iowa's 2,000 present-day vascular plant species are non-native (81); 16 of Iowa's common nesting birds have been steadily declining in number since 1966, suggesting that bird populations as a whole have been seriously compromised by loss of habitat, pesticide use, and other environmentally harmful practices (101); of Iowa's original 28 million acres of tallgrass prairie, approximately 28,000 acres, or 0.1 percent, remain unconverted to utilitarian land uses (114–15); Iowa's timber coverage is a mere third of the 6.6 million acres of woodland that Euro-American settlers encountered (154); and much of the state's remaining timberland has been invaded by nonnative woody plants or compromised by diseases (184).

Mutel discusses many positive achievements under various state programs and private efforts, as well as noteworthy initiatives of non-profit organizations. At times, however, I wanted an expanded geographical context to put Iowa's current status and possible future in broader perspective. For instance, her discussion of the history of timber use in Iowa might have benefited from some reference to Michael Williams's sweeping book, *Americans and Their Forests*. Similarly, when Mutel states that "if we are to . . . recover a sustainable agricultural landscape, we need to mimic . . . our native tallgrass prairie" (121), she might have introduced readers to the research on "natural systems agriculture" that has been ongoing for two decades at The Land Institute near Salina, Kansas. In one instance where she does reference the prairie research (bison grazing and fire regimes) being carried out by Kansas State University on the 8,600-acre Konza Prairie near Manhattan, the location is misidentified as the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve near Strong City, Kansas (151), where cattleman Ed Bass holds a long-term grazing lease on more than 10,000 acres. But these are minor notes to an otherwise fine book; her fundamental message is well supported with research data.

Most important, Mutel gives modern voice to the concerns and hopes of Thomas Macbride, whom she quotes liberally throughout. Like Macbride, who in 1898 cautiously predicted that "the preservation of springs and streams and forests will one day be undertaken as freely as the building of fences or bridges or barns" (225), Mutel asks Iowans "to take the lead and to demonstrate that forward-looking

land use can partner with environmental healing and wholeness" (260). For every Iowan who professes to love this state, *The Emerald Horizon* is a must-read book.

Exiles and Pioneers: Eastern Indians in the Trans-Mississippi West, by John P. Bowes. Studies in North American Indian History. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007. xiv, 272 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, index. \$70.00 cloth, \$22.99 paper.

Reviewer Thomas J. Lappas is assistant professor of history at Nazareth College, Rochester, New York. His dissertation (Indiana University, 2003) was "'A Victim of His Own Love': Sébastien Racle, Native Americans, and Religious Politics in Eighteenth-Century New France."

A common problem among studies of forced migrations of American Indians from the East to the West is that they often concentrate on a limited number of tribes and focus solely on the tragedies of U.S.-American Indian relations. The Cherokee Trail of Tears and the Black Hawk War are examples of important events that are too frequently presented as the entirety of a people's history. Often ignored are the processes of adaptation and survival that mark most of American Indian history. In *Exiles and Pioneers*, John P. Bowes avoids these common problems. He focuses on four tribes who are frequently included in histories of the colonial era through the War of 1812, but are usually excluded from the narrative of U.S. history after those eras: the Shawnees, Delawares, Wyandots, and Potawatomis. He traces those tribes' movement from the Great Lakes region to Missouri and Kansas and follows them through their ultimate dispersal to a variety of places, including Indian Territory and Canada. Bowes cleverly applies the language normally reserved for white settlers to the Indian "pioneers" who attempted to build a permanent life for themselves in the Midwest. The story continues through their ultimate "exile" from their new lands following Kansas statehood and the end of the Civil War. The rest of the title is a bit too ambitious for the scope of the book: "Eastern Indians in the Trans-Mississippi West" is too broad a category for the four tribes he discusses.

Exiles and Pioneers is organized into three parts, each representing a stage in the process of Indian dislocation. Most chapters pair up two of the four tribes. At times, these linkages might confuse readers not already familiar with the backgrounds of the individual tribes. In part one, "From the Great Lakes to the Prairie Plains," Bowes explains the removal experience of all but the Wyandots. Chapter one links the Delawares and a faction of Shawnees, presumably because they were