

TABER, S. W. AND S. B. FLEENOR. 2005. *Invertebrates of Central Texas Wetlands*. Texas Tech Univ. Press, Lubbock. xi + 322 pp. ISBN 13-978-089672-550-8. Paperback. \$24.95 (ISBN 13-978-089672-542-3, hardback).

There are many habitats across the United States that can be considered special due to one feature or another. Large numbers of these areas are unique in that they possess an assemblage of organisms not found in the surrounding areas, if at all outside these particular habitats. Generally, these habitats are novel in obvious ways, i.e., isolated dune systems, cave systems, sinks, bogs, or springs. The locations of these interesting ecosystems are often known only to a select few who are intimately familiar with the particular region and its flora and fauna. If the location and unique nature of these important areas were documented and readily available, these habitats would undoubtedly receive more attention from local property owners, naturalists, conservationists, scientists, and the general public. This attention is sorely needed in order to draw attention to the conservation and wise management of our natural resources as well as to educate both children and adults about the unique organisms that live in or near their own backyards. Additionally, these areas have much to contribute to our understanding of the ecology and biodiversity of these unique assemblages of organisms. Perhaps the best way to raise public awareness is to produce a field guide that focuses on these areas. This is exactly what S. Welton and S. Fleenor have done with their "Invertebrates of Central Texas Wetlands."

Unlike most field guides, this book is directed at the invertebrates of a particular area. While it does a good job of covering these organisms, its strength is the coverage of the Ottine wetlands as a whole. It not only discusses the region in detail but also presents photographs of various habitat types, maps, and descriptions of several specific hiking and nature trails traversing this area, all of which are extremely important for visitors. As an entomologist, I am impressed by the fact that the authors discuss legal issues such as not collecting organisms in parks and preserves without the appropriate permits and the necessity of receiving permission to enter private property. Such information is both appropriate and worth repeating.

The first chapter is a general treatment of the Ottine wetlands and does an excellent job of introducing the area, geological features, habitats and unique features. In addition, the authors also discuss the history of the biological and botanical surveys of this area. These studies span some seventy-five years and provide valuable information for anyone wishing to consult a more comprehensive list of the organisms known to occur in this area, including researchers who are interested in conducting comparative survey

work to assess how the biota of the area has changed. The authors also cite and discuss studies that deal with the geology and hydrology of the area, placing this in the context of the various wetland habitats that occur in the Ottine wetlands. Wetland habitats can be quite diverse in composition with no two looking exactly alike. The authors take the readers through specific regions of the Ottine wetlands and explain the types of vegetation that can be found there, complete with photographs for those unfamiliar with specific plant species discussed, as well as pointing out what sort of geological features can be found there. Consequently, a reader fortunate enough to visit the area can be led directly to the major features that delineate each area or wetland habitat from others found close by. The book's descriptions are so clear that without even being there it is not hard to imagine what standing in the middle of the Ottine wetlands would be like. What a wonderful component to include in a field guide for such a unique area.

Each of the chapters that follow covers representatives of a specific group of invertebrates. Obviously, most focus on specific insect orders but chapters also cover crustaceans, millipedes, centipedes, spiders, scorpions, slugs, and snails. For each species represented, information is included on the organism's biology, distribution, size, and those other species easily confused with the species under discussion due to similar appearance. In addition, a color photograph is also included for each specimen to aid in identification. The obvious effort made to acquire accurate identifications by seeking out experts in the field is appreciated. The experts consulted are listed by name in the book's preface.

Another appreciated section of the book is its appendices. Appendix 1 lists the Texas-Endemic Invertebrates of the Ottine Wetlands and Appendix 2 lists the exotic invertebrates known to occur in the Ottine Wetlands. This information is of obvious value when studying species distributions and the interactions and competition between species found in a region. The encroachment of exotic species into regions of high endemism should be of concern to the ecology and conservation of these areas and the fauna that they contain.

Both the glossary and bibliography are well developed and appropriate for the subjects covered in the book. The breadth of both are important for the clear presentation of the content as well as for highlighting the resources needed by readers who want more specific information on a particular subject or taxa. Not intended as a coffee table book, the compact size of the book makes it perfect for taking into the field.

Relict ecosystems such as this one deserve more attention than they have traditionally received. This field guide will no doubt generate more interest in both nature and the unique faunal make-up of this special ecosystem, no doubt bringing the Ottine wetlands and the organisms living within to the attention of the amateur and

scientific community alike. This cannot be said of many books.

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