

BOOK REVIEW

Guide to the Vascular Flora of Illinois: Revised and Enlarged Edition., Robert H. Mohlenbrock. 1986. Southern Illinois University Press, P. O. Box 3697, Carbondale. 507 p. \$42.50 cloth, \$16.95 paper.

In this revised edition of his 1975 work, Dr. Mohlenbrock, Distinguished Professor of Botany at Southern Illinois University, presents an updated conspectus of the Illinois flora. Enlarged but still concise, the 8 1/2" × 5" × 1 1/4" book is ideally designed for carrying in the field. It includes all the floristic essentials: keys to species, scientific and common names, flowering dates, habitat and distribution data, and notation of major infraspecific taxa, color forms, and interspecific hybrids. The book opens with a valuable 47-page physiographic section, "The Natural Divisions of Illinois," reprinted from a publication of the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission.

In the first edition, the author reported 2699 species in the vascular plant flora; in this revised edition he reports 2853. A few of the additions are native species, but as one would anticipate in a flora as well studied as that of Illinois, most of the additions are alien species, many of them adventive escapes.

Overall, the taxonomic treatment is up to date. In family after family, Mohlenbrock's familiarity with current taxonomic literature is evident. Some lapses I noted were the continued use for common teasel of the name *Dipsacus sylvestris* Hudson, now generally regarded to be a synonym of *Dipsacus fullonum* L., and the spellings Alismaceae and Haloragidaceae, rather than those conserved for these families, Alismataceae and Haloragaceae. In matters of classification, the author tends toward fragmentation. For example, both the Confederate violet and

the common blue violet are treated as species (*Viola priceana* Pollard and *V. pratincola* Greene, respectively) rather than being merged under *Viola sororia* Willd., as they are in many current studies of violets. The genus *Euphorbia* is broken into three smaller genera, and the family Saxifragaceae into six smaller families. These and other similar instances lead to a somewhat enlarged number of species, genera, and families reported for the flora as a whole. Although I would personally favor a more conservative classification, Mohlenbrock's taxonomic decisions are defensible ones, and he is generally consistent in this approach.

There is one hard price to be paid for the book's economy in size. The keys are difficult to scan and use. They are presented in bracketed style (often in itself a source of difficulty), and alternate couplets are not indented. As a result, the keys in large families and genera consist of a long list of entries all flush with the left margin and all preceded by couplet numbers in uniform boldface. Another smaller price paid for economy is in the index to scientific names. Limited to names of families and genera, it denies the reader an alphabetized list of species. Commendably, on the other hand, technical terms in the keys have not been abbreviated in order to save space.

All in all, the shortcomings of this work are few, and the strengths many. This is an excellent presentation in handbook form of a vast amount of information on the Illinois flora.

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