

BOOK REVIEW

MATT RITTER. 2018. **California Plants: A Guide to our Iconic Flora.** (ISBN-13: 978-09998960-0-6, pbk). Pacific Street Publishing, San Luis Obispo, California, U.S.A. (**Orders:** www.pacificstreetpublishing.com). \$27.50 US, 321 pp, 1000+ color photos, 150 maps, 6" × 9".

An atypical field guide for the typical naturalist, Matt Ritter's *California Plants: A Guide to Our Iconic Flora* provides the content naturalists need when traversing the state or want an introduction to California's immense biodiversity. The state is home to over 5000 native species and more than 1100 non-native species, forcing Ritter to narrow the scope of his book to describe a little over 500 plants. Regardless, this field guide is a true resource in introducing California's more abundant, iconic, and unique species.

Ritter sections his guide by general habitats: coastal scrub and chaparral plants, wildflowers and grassland plants, forest and woodland plants, dune and coastal plants, saltmarsh and freshwater wetland plants, and desert; he uses these categories to organize the plants based on their general distribution. Often plants can be found in more than one plant community, which is what prompted Ritter to section the chapters with the vague and varying general habitats. Basic distribution maps are provided with each plant profile for good measure for anyone unfamiliar with the state. So, feel encouraged to explore the state from the expansive forests in northern California to the Mojave Desert in the south and the Sierra Nevada mountains in the east.

Species profiles are listed alphabetically within the chapter, all with the intention for high efficiency in locating one's plant of choice. When using the field guide, expect frequent visits to topics in natural history of the state, ecosystem, or species as Ritter works to bring each plant and region to life. Ritter forms an identity for each plant. Whether it is explaining the name, its relationship to California, or its role in the landscape, no species is left anonymous. Lastly, no field guide is complete without photographs, and Ritter's field guide is far from exception. (If anything, it is exceptional!) The guide touts more than 1000 full-color photographs that convey the glory of the California landscape and its unique flora. The vivid photography paired with Ritter's dialogue truly brings both to life.

California is included on the world's short list of "biodiversity hotspots," and Ritter makes consistent efforts to discuss and refer to threats facing the state's amazing plant diversity. People have inhabited California for centuries, and human intervention has taken its toll on the landscape and flora. Habitat loss due to development, agriculture, climate change, and invasive species all have heavily impacted the flora, and to not refer to it would be to ignore the elephant in the room. Ritter works diligently throughout his guide to create a persona for the California flora, and as a result, threats to it become personal. Ritter points out so well that frequently we will only act to conserve what we know and appreciate, that conservation of native species is a public concern. California's diverse flora, among others around world, cannot wait any longer for conservation effort, and *California Plants* adds to the narrative as an introductory, engaging field guide that encourages you explore, appreciate, and understand the California flora.—Sarah Brown, *Botanical Research Institute of Texas, Fort Worth, Texas, U.S.A.*