

**Mammals of North Dakota.** First edition. Robert Seabloom. 2011. North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, North Dakota State University, Fargo, North Dakota, USA. 460 pages + iv. \$36.00 (paperback). ISBN: 978-0-911042-74-0.

As a mammalogist living in the Great Plains, I was excited to hear about the publication of *The Mammals of North Dakota* by Robert Seabloom. No such field guide has been compiled since the late 1920s, leaving nature lovers and researchers alike without a modern source of information about the mammals of the state. Despite my enthusiasm, I will admit that I was originally expecting a standard (i.e., boring) field guide with dry facts about the taxonomic groups of interest. Much to my surprise, this book was not a mere list of relevant information, but an engaging work providing extensive background on the regional mammalian fauna. I was especially impressed how Seabloom managed to couch the important and relevant facts about each species in a broader context, permitting the reader to develop a rich understanding of the landscapes and ecosystems found in North Dakota.

The book begins by giving the reader some background information on the Class Mammalia, including a helpful section that lists not only the taxonomy of extinct and extant mammalian groups, but also offering a brief description of each order and where these animals are found. Such information is useful for nature enthusiasts and hobby biologists, who may have little background information about the order.

An introductory section, written by John Hoganson, a paleontologist with the North Dakota Geological Survey, provides a fascinating description of the mammalian paleofauna of North Dakota. Hoganson paints a picture of how the mammals of the state have changed over geological time, beginning with the small, inconspicuous rodent-like animals of the Cretaceous to the giant ground sloths and woolly mammoths of the Pleistocene. He also provides information about the diversity of North Dakota's landscapes and how these have changed over time, including shallow oceans, forested swamplands, and savanna.

A second introductory section written by William Jensen, a biologist with the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, talks about the landscape and flora of North Dakota. This section is especially valuable for those who are new to North Dakota and hold the common misconception that that the state is flat and homogenous. Jensen's narrative points out that this is far from true, and that North Dakota is home to three unique types of prairie, riparian and upland forests, extensive wetlands, and rugged badlands. The background on the flora of each habitat type provides the reader with a base for understanding why the mammalian community changes across the state, which Seabloom directly addresses in a section about the mammalian provinces and faunal elements of North Dakota.

The bulk of the book consists of detailed species accounts of the different mammals found in North Dakota. These are divided by mammalian order, with each section beginning with a brief description of the general characteristics of animals within that order. Species accounts are further sorted by mammalian family, resulting in accounts of the most closely related species being clustered within the book. Each account provides information about a species' general characteristics, distribution (overall and state-specific), habitat, ecology and behavior, reproduction, and conservation status. For most species, a high quality image also is included. Overall, the species accounts are very detailed, extensively cited, and easy enough to read that they are accessible to new students of mammalogy and seasoned naturalists alike.

It is obvious from reading *The Mammals of North Dakota* that Seabloom has put an exceptional amount of work into making this a thorough, accurate resource. Seabloom has an excellent command of the literature, citing over 400 references in his book. He is especially knowledgeable about older literature that can be particularly difficult to obtain and would have been long forgotten by many other authors. In addition, an interesting characteristic of the species accounts is the inclusion of information about the names used by endemic Native American tribes for a particular mammal. I commend Seabloom for including information about Native American culture in his book—a rarity in this genre. Hence, the reader can be assured that there are no major holes missing in what is described about the mammalian species found in North Dakota.

Following the species accounts section, Seabloom provides some information about working with mammals in the field, as well as a highly detailed key to the mammals of North Dakota. The key includes full color pictures and descriptions of common skull measurements, which are critical for making identifications in several mammalian families. The key will certainly be an invaluable tool for those looking to make identifications of mammals they observe or collect in the field. The book concludes with a detailed glossary—again, an invaluable resource to the new student of mammalogy.

Overall, *The Mammals of North Dakota* is a comprehensive guide that will be a valuable resource to students of all levels, nature lovers of all ages, as well as both hobby and professional biologists. It has filled an important gap in our knowledge of North Dakotan fauna, while also managing to be an engaging read. This volume has earned a place on my bookshelf, and certainly is deserving of such status among those who have a keen interest in North Dakotan mammals.—*Erin H. Gillam, Assistant Professor of Biological Sciences, North Dakota State University, Fargo, North Dakota 58108, USA.*