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## Review of *Roadside Geology of Nebraska* By Harmon D. Maher Jr., George F. Engelmann, and Robert D. Shuster

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## BOOK REVIEWS

**Roadside Geology of Nebraska.** By Harmon D. Maher Jr., George F. Engelmann, and Robert D. Shuster. Missoula: Mountain Press Publishing Company, 2003. xii + 264 pp. Photographs, maps, figures, glossary, bibliography, index. \$18.00 paper.

Like many of the fly-over states, Nebraska suffers from a bad reputation when it comes to scenery. But the Sand Hills of northwestern Nebraska are one of the most stark, yet entrancing landscapes in the country. The Platte, the Missouri, and the Niobrara are great places to see river systems at work. Nebraska's Cretaceous rocks and Oligocene-Pleistocene sediments have produced classic vertebrate fossils that grace museums in Nebraska and throughout the world.

The roadside geology series, published by Mountain Press, has helped introduce a large, generally non-geological audience to the rocks and fossils of many states. This addition to the series, by three geologists at the University of Nebraska-Omaha, not only does a good job of making Nebraska's geology accessible to visitors, but probably will teach Nebraska natives a thing or two.

The book begins with a general geologic description of the state, a strong summary that places Nebraska geology in the context of North America and provides background that comes in handy for the highway-by-highway sections that follow. Like most books in this series, the volume focuses primarily on the descriptions of geologic sights to be seen along the state's major highways, including highly traveled roads such as Interstate 80. In addition, it brings more detail to bear on "geolocalities," or those areas of particular geologic interest, such as the Agate Fossil Beds National Monument in northwestern Nebraska and Scotts Bluff National Monument along the old Oregon Trail.

For the most part the writing is clear and concise, with occasional good stories (such as the relationship between the Nebraska Sand Hills and the discovery of dinosaur fossils in the Gobi desert of Mongolia). The book's illustrations, which include a number of geologic maps, shaded-relief maps, and photographs, also help give non-geologists a useful, new perspective, especially for surface features such as sand dunes, which can be subtle and difficult to appreciate from the ground.

At times, though, the language is likely to challenge non-geologists. While the book includes a glossary, such phrases as "arcuate scarps and slip surfaces" or "vesicular and porphyritic volcanic rocks" or "smectite clays" probably need definition. More careful editing also would have been helpful.

Overall, *Roadside Geology of Nebraska* is a solid introduction to an under-appreciated part of the world. Pick it up and hit the road. **Rex Buchanan**, *Kansas Geological Survey, University of Kansas*.