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## Review of *An Atlas of the Sand Hills*

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**An Atlas of the Sand Hills.** Third edition expanded and edited by Ann S. Bleed and Charles A. Flowerday. Lincoln: Conservation and Survey Division, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, 1998. x+260 pp. Illustrations, maps, figures, tables, notes, references, index. \$20.00 paper (ISBN 1-56161-002-X).

The Sand Hills region, the largest stabilized sand dune formation in the western hemisphere, presents a varied landscape from lush, productive wetlands to wind-swept dune tops with frequent “blowouts.” Covering about twelve million acres in central and northcentral Nebraska, it represents about 25% of the state’s surface area. The region’s extreme importance to Nebraska—residing in its vast supply of forage for beef cattle production, its critical role in recharging the High Plains Aquifer, and its aesthetic and recreational values—has long made it a major topic of study for students in agricultural and natural resource sciences. Moreover, coursework related to such topics as rangeland conservation and management, livestock production, animal-plant-soil relations, and the hydrologic cycle commonly focuses on the Sand Hills for examples of concepts and practices. Students and teachers did not have a standard and complete reference on the natural history of the Sand Hills, however, until 1989 when *An Atlas of the Sand Hills* was first published. In addition to providing reference material to college and university students, the editors state the atlas’s purpose is to “help natural-resource managers and others making decisions about the Sand Hills” and to “stimulate not only a general interest in the area but also continued research in the unique region.”

*An Atlas of the Sand Hills* is much more than an atlas: informative, well-written text complements the collection of maps, illustrations, and photographs throughout. Comprised of eighteen chapters by experts in each topic area, the atlas opens with an introduction in which the editors present an appealing and accurate view of the Sand Hills through photographs and descriptive text. The following six chapters describe the region’s physical or abiotic components, including climate, geology, soils, groundwater, streams, lakes, and wetlands. The middle seven provide an overview of plant and animal life; the final four summarize the history of the Sand Hills’ human inhabitation as well as current use and management. Each chapter has a full complement of photographs, illustrations, and tables that present its content visually. A complete index aids the reader in finding specific topics.

The only revision between this third edition and the second is the addition of a chapter on insects by Brett Ratcliffe of the University of Nebraska State Museum, much of it devoted to a review of the Sand Hills’ insect orders. In addition, the chapter presents a brief natural history of insects, including the significant roles they play in our world. Considering that the other chapters were written ten years ago, the reader may be disappointed that none was updated in the third edition. Most of the information and illustrations are still current (geology and animal life, for instance), but

the sections dealing with resource production, use, and trends need revision. A chapter on the interacting influences of the various abiotic and biotic factors on the structure and dynamics of the Sand Hills would also be a welcome addition. Separating the interrelated factors into a large number of disparate chapters, as the atlas does, impedes the reader from readily leashing the components together to comprehend Sand Hill ecology truly.

There are plans for a fourth edition to include updated chapters and other revisions. Regardless of edition, the atlas is an outstanding reference on the natural history of the Sand Hills. Although its designated audience is natural resource managers, researchers, and students of the Sand Hills, topics and illustrations in many of the chapters should appeal to a more general audience. The editors certainly succeed in attaining their principal objective of providing "the reader with a better understanding and deeper appreciation of this distinctive area of Nebraska." **Walter H. Schacht**, *Department of Agronomy, University of Nebraska-Lincoln.*