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Review of *NEBRASKAland Magazine: Wildlife Viewing Guide* by Joseph Knue

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NEBRASKAland Magazine: Wildlife Viewing Guide. Joseph Knue. Lincoln: Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, 1997. 96 pp. Photos, maps, index. \$8.95 paper (ISBN 0028-1964).

Joseph Knue's new Nebraska Wildlife Viewing Guide is a well organized and concise guide that many state residents and visitors will find useful as they travel throughout Nebraska. Its sharp photographs and maps

greatly add to the overall aesthetically pleasing quality of the book, and the directions and icons used to depict the various available recreational facilities are clear and easy to follow. Given the modest price tag, the book should accompany anyone planning to view wildlife throughout the Nebraska countryside.

As with any book, this guide is not without its faults. The main problem with the book is that the introduction does not provide a general survey of the species are likely to be encountered on a trip to Nebraska. The author provides species information, but readers must read the entire book to get an overall sense of what they might expect. Readers from out of state, however, will want to know up front, "What can be seen in Nebraska that would attract us to this state?" It would have been extremely helpful to readers from eastern parts of the country if they were made aware what wildlife they could expect to see in western Nebraska. For example, the author could have stated, "Birders from the eastern United States may encounter the following species of western birds in western Nebraska: western grebe, white-faced ibis, cinnamon teal, long-billed curlew, Swainson's hawk, ferruginous hawk, prairie falcon, sharp-tailed grouse, burrowing owl, common poorwill, white-throated swift, broad-tailed hummingbird, Lewis' woodpecker, Say's phoebe, violet-green swallow, pinyon jay, black-billed magpie, mountain bluebird, Cassin's sparrow, chestnut-collared longspur, lark bunting, yellow headed blackbird, and western tanager."

Similar short lists could have been provided for mammals (prairie dog, bison, elk, pronghorn, mule deer, badger, bighorn sheep, kangaroo rat, least chipmunk, fringed-tailed bat, white-tailed jackrabbit, black-tailed jackrabbit) and reptiles (prairie rattlesnake, massasauga rattlesnake, earless lizard) that visitors might encounter during a trip across the state.

Because many of the wildlife viewers using this guide are likely to be bird watchers, the book would have greatly benefited from a bar graph providing rough dates and relative abundance (as found in most bird-finding guides) throughout the year for the majority of bird species recorded in the state. Some of the pages towards the back of the book (including pp. 81, 84-85, 88-89, 92-93, and 96) were printed with lighter ink and in my copy some of the words are difficult to read.

As well, the guide contains several inaccuracies that could give viewers the wrong impression on the likelihood of seeing a particular species. For example, Knue states that short-eared owls "frequently hunt on bright sunny days" (p. 28). Although this owl is a diurnal species, the best chances for observing it is at dawn and dusk, or when it is flushed from its ground roosts.

The most glaring inaccuracy, however, is the author's claim that upland sandpipers and lark buntings are seen "year-round" in Nebraska (p. 94). Upland sandpipers winter in South America from Surinam and northern Brazil south to central Argentina and Uruguay, while lark buntings winter no closer to Nebraska than north-central Texas.

The above-mentioned flaws should be judged to be minor at best, however, and given the overall excellent quality of this viewing guide, the \$8.95 price tag is a steal and well worth the investment. **Paul M. McKenzie**, *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Columbia, Missouri*.