

A Field Guide to Nevada Grasses. By Barry L. Perryman and Quentin D. Skinner. 2007. Indigenous Rangeland Management Press, Lander, WY, USA. 256 p. US\$39.99. paper. ISBN 0-940936-99-2.

Field biologists and resource managers who need to identify the predominant grasses on Nevada's rangelands will appreciate *A Field Guide to Nevada Grasses*. This excellent field guide is particularly applicable to individuals who lack an extensive background in plant taxonomy but need to know the grasses they encounter. The high quality and taxonomic value of this guide are evident on the cover. The detailed photos of an Indian ricegrass seed and floret are repeated for every species in the book.

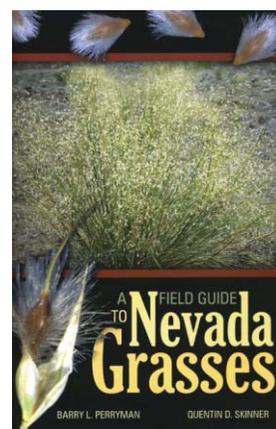
A Field Guide to Nevada Grasses covers 118 grass species found on Nevada's rangelands. Most, if not all, of the species described also occur in one or more adjoining states; thus, this guide is widely applicable beyond Nevada. Good field identification guides are equally valuable to users with and without taxonomic skills. This book uses a combination of text and high-quality photos to easily meet that goal. The authors' approach begins in the Table of Contents. They abandon the traditional approach of using extensive taxonomic language to identify the specific grass tribe and genus. Rather, they divided the 118 species into ten groups based on their probable geographic and/or topographic location. That is, the first 59 species are classified by their typical growing location in Nevada: species widespread throughout the state; species found in Hot Deserts at low to mid-elevations and mid- to high elevations, respectively; and species in Cold Deserts at low to mid-elevations and mid- to high elevations, respectively. The remaining 59 species are classified into species groups typically restricted to montane to subalpine settings, subalpine to alpine areas, riparian zones, dry to wet meadows, introduced forage species, and species found in nonspecific landscape settings. Nontaxonomists only need to identify their general geographic and/or geomorphic location to move to the section that identifies the species they have probably encountered. This approach is substantially easier than wading through the extensive taxonomic language used by traditional grass identification texts.

Once users move to the species groups they encounter a consistent identification approach throughout the book. All species descriptions and photos occur on pages that face one another. A user of this guide will never have to read text on one page and then turn to another page to look at the accompanying photos. The only time a page must be turned is to look at another species or use the glossary to clarify a term. The left-hand page includes all of the taxonomic text used to describe the species. A consistent four-paragraph approach identifies 1) morphological characteristics that identify the tribe, 2) common vegetative descriptions for the species, 3) standard floral descriptions, and 4) information about the species ecology and topographic/geomorphologic location on the landscape. There is a metric ruler (mm and cm increments) at the bottom of each page for measurement of specific plant parts. The font is larger than typically found in taxonomic texts, a characteristic greatly appreciated by nontaxonomists. The page opposite the taxonomic description has numerous photographs that aid species identification. The general format has one close-up photo of either the whole plant or its inflorescence and one photo of the general landscape setting in which the species occurs. On occasion, the landscape setting photo is absent; however, the topographic description on the opposing page is vivid enough to create a mental picture of the plants typical landscape setting.

Additional photos clearly illustrate important characteristics of the panicle, spikelet, floret, and/or ligule used to identify the species. These photos are crystal clear, well labeled, and occur with a black background that enhances contrast and clarity. The photos typically have equal or better clarity, and are better labeled, than the line diagrams in *Intermountain Flora*; the *Manual of the Grasses of the United States*; and the *Jepson Manual, Higher Plants of California*. Furthermore, the photos color often shows subtle differences between plant parts that can help species identification.

A Field Guide to Nevada Grasses has a 13-page glossary of the taxonomic terms and is relatively easy to read. The terms are printed in bold and the simple and clear definitions are usually well under two lines in length. The font is larger than used in most taxonomic books and the text is double spaced. There is an extensive index that includes both scientific and common names in alphabetical order, as independent entries. Common names are in a bold font, which makes them easy to separate from scientific names, thus aiding the search for specific species.

For a field guide, the overall construction is good. The book has a soft cover but the binding is solid, and is both sewn and glued. The pages are printed on high quality, relatively thick,



6 inches by 9 inches glossy paper that will not easily tear. Field manuals by nature receive punishment and the quality of this one's materials suggests it will endure field use well.

I highly recommend *A Field Guide to Nevada Grasses* for all who wish to identify grasses throughout Nevada. The guide covers most grass species in Nevada and the very high

quality photos of small, hard-to-see features greatly aid identification for those with and without schooling in the identification of grass plants.

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