



7-21-1995

Mountains and Plains: The Ecology of Wyoming Landscapes by Dennis H. Knight

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Recommended Citation

Harper, Kimball T. (1995) "*Mountains and Plains: The Ecology of Wyoming Landscapes* by Dennis H. Knight," *Great Basin Naturalist*: Vol. 55 : No. 3 , Article 12.
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/gbn/vol55/iss3/12>

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BOOK REVIEW

Mountains and plains: the ecology of Wyoming landscapes. Dennis H. Knight. Yale University Press, New Haven and London. 1994. xi, 338 pp., illus. \$40 hardback.

Many books describe the landscapes and ecology of subregions of the United States. This book provides a detailed description and ecological interpretation of Wyoming and adjacent areas. Although this region has long been a magnet, drawing national and international visitors to Yellowstone National Park, Teton National Park, the Black Hills, Devil's Tower National Monument, and to the expansive, sparsely populated plains and mountains that lie between those public attractions, this book provides more detail and a more holistic overview of the region than any existing reference designed for public consumption. Unusually well illustrated and handsomely designed, *Mountains and Plains* will appeal to and enrich the understanding of any thoughtful visitor to this land of natural wonders.

The author, Dennis H. Knight, has distilled for the reader a delightful mixture of landscape images and informative facts from his teaching and research experiences of over 30 years in the natural landscapes of Wyoming. Knight has written the book with interested laymen in mind. Roughly 120 carefully selected, well-reproduced photographs enrich the text. Many of the photos are masterfully selected to illustrate a puzzling or unexpected relationship. The photographs made my first "glance" at the book a rewarding four-hour experience! Numerous photos and their brief captions so inflamed my curiosity that I had to search the text for the author's well-researched comments before I could continue on. In keeping with his objective of writing for laymen, Knight uses only common names for animals and plants in the text, but well-organized appendices permit interested professionals to quickly link an unambiguous Latin binomial to any

given common name. In the same vein, the author cites supporting references in such a way that the flow of the narrative is not broken, but interested scholars can readily determine where detailed studies of particular problems are published. The brief but clear explanations in the text are startlingly well supported by a massive body of references (over 1150 original sources cited).

Knight, a past president of the Ecological Society of America and a science advisor to numerous management agencies in the nation, has obviously poured many months of intense effort into *Mountains and Plains*. The entire book is carefully integrated and clearly written. His manuscript has been artfully and professionally assembled into a handsome, durable hardback volume by Yale University Press. Photographs are clearly reproduced and tastefully integrated into an essentially error-free text. The background sections of the book (Chapters 1 and 2) are supported by a variety of maps that permit the reader to quickly determine climatic, geologic, edaphic, and land ownership status at any geographic point in the area of concern.

Mountains and Plains is a book that anyone concerned with the natural history or management of Wyoming (or nearby) landscapes should own. Interested laymen will find the book to be informative and reliable. Managers of natural resources in the area will find the volume to be an essential companion in the field or at the desk. The price is modest for a hardback book of such sturdiness. Both Knight and Yale University Press are to be commended for a valuable contribution to our understanding of the natural environments in that area where the High Plains encounter the Rocky Mountains.

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