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A Color Guidebook to Common Rocky Mountain Lichens by Larry L. St. Clair

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BOOK REVIEW

A Color Guidebook to Common Rocky Mountain Lichens. Larry L. St. Clair. M.L. Bean Life Science Museum, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah 84602. 1999. \$19.95 (\$2.50 shipping and handling for 1st book; \$1.00 for each additional book), softcover. ISBN 0-8425-2454-1.

A Color Guidebook to Common Rocky Mountain Lichens includes a wide variety of species, from small microlichens of granite boulders to large, showy genera that hang from trees. Most lichen books either do not include color photos or cover only the larger macrolichens, simply omitting the small crustose, but often showy, saxicolous species. With this guidebook, amateur enthusiasts can now picture key their collections or simply gain familiarity with lichens from a variety of substrates and Rocky Mountain habitats. This is the first of its kind for North America. However, similar to wild-flower books that encompass large geographic areas, this text does not contain all the species one might encounter in the field. Technical lichen floras will need to be consulted for more detailed identification. The photographs are those of Steven and the late Sylvia Sharnoff, who deserve much of the credit for making this book a winner. I would recommend that all biologists and outdoor enthusiasts who live in or visit the West obtain a copy. I believe it will introduce more students and amateurs to lichens than any other book published to date by a North American lichenologist. Considering the cost of reproducing color photos and the wide geographic coverage of this book, it is a very good value.

Given the general nature of the guidebook, it is perhaps inconsistent to not include any common names for these organisms. This would add appeal for the novice in particular.

Identification keys are straightforward and well written, but they lack important details and omit mention of similar species that could be encountered within the Rocky Mountains. Some of the common showy species are not included. For example, the bright sulfur green crustose lichen, *Acarospora chlorophana*, which covers canyon walls throughout the Rocky Mountains, is not included in the book. In addition, there is no index to search for species that might be listed under another name. Serious lichen students will need to obtain additional technical lichen floras to satisfy their desire to name all the lichens they encounter.

A Color Guidebook to Common Rocky Mountain Lichens is well organized and is similar in format to the recently published *Macrolichens of the Pacific Northwest* (McCune and Geiser 1997, Oregon State University Press). In comparison, St. Clair's guidebook contains equally good information on the usefulness of lichens as indicators of air quality, but much less on habitat, ecology, and taxonomy. Notes on similar species and morphological characteristics used to distinguish among them would have improved the usefulness of this book. In addition, southern Rocky Mountain species are better represented than are those from the northern Rocky Mountains. The geographic range of a species is discussed briefly under the category "substrate/habitat" though the descriptions are very general. Although in paperback format, this book is well bound, and its 6 × 9-inch size easily accommodates for use in the field.

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