

BOOK REVIEW

Wildflowers of Orange County and the Santa Ana Mountains

Robert L. Allen and Fred M. Roberts Jr. (2013)

Laguna Wilderness Press, PO Box 149, Laguna Beach, CA 92652

(\$35.00)

This long-awaited color photo book about the flowering plants of Orange County is now available. Bob Allen and Fred Roberts, in 500 pages, have done a wonderful job of summarizing this topic. It is, however, more than just a photo book. The first 35 pages cover brief descriptions of geography, geology, plant communities, plant anatomy, and principles of plant classification. For the lay person, as an aid to plant identification, inside the front cover are diagrams of flower and leaf morphology which are repeated in the first chapter. There is even a section on field protocol and possible dangerous animals to watch for. Using an alphabetical arrangement of updated plant families, as delineated by the second edition of *The Jepson Manual* (Baldwin et.al. 2012), the body of the text includes a description of each plant, its habitat, where it might be found locally, and an explanation of nomenclatural etiology. Each description is accompanied by a color photo of the entire plant as well as a close-up of the flower. Where it is appropriate, photos of distinctive fruits are included. Interestingly, tucked into various locations, one may find thought-provoking quotations.

In the geography section there is an excellent map of Orange County, including important place names. It also shows major roads, and public lands are color-coded for ease of identification with respect to managing agencies. The last chapter of the book entitled, "Where to Go Wildflower-watching" includes a series of trail maps to various popular localities on public lands. Each map is accompanied with a description of the topography and what plants might be observed along the way. The section concludes with an alphabetical listing of public lands along with a brief description and contact information.

For the purpose of organization and field identification of plants, different books use different techniques. There are several options for Orange County. In *The Jepson Manual*, plant families and species of the entire state are covered alphabetically. Treatment of each taxon is very thorough and there are elaborate taxonomic keys. Not every taxon is illustrated, and illustrations are black and white drawings. Allen and Roberts have arranged the plants alphabetically by family, but there are no keys. Most of the plants covered lend themselves to color photography. There is no comprehensive coverage of trees. Various trees are mentioned as components of plant communities, but not described taxonomically or

illustrated by color photos. Among the genera not illustrated are *Alnus*, *Populus*, *Pinus*, *Salix*, and *Quercus*. In another color photo treatment, Clarke, et. al. (2007), in the *Flora of the Santa Ana River and Environs*, have arranged plant families according to traditional phylogeny, which is an approach that may appeal to botanists who are more familiar with traditional taxonomy. This book also includes lower plants such as Waterweeds, Club Mosses, and Ferns. Another approach, which may be easier for lay persons, particularly those who turn pages until they recognize a photograph, is to arrange color photographs of plants and/or animals according to habitat. This is the approach taken by Schoenherr (2011) in *Wild and Beautiful: A Natural History of Open Spaces in Orange County*. A similar approach is followed by Elisabeth Brown (2007) in her diminutive but handy, *Back Pocket Field Guide: An Introduction to Orange County Wildlands*. Finally, another way to appeal to lay persons, unfamiliar with the rules of taxonomy, is to arrange the plants according to flower color. While there is no book, specifically about Orange County that uses this approach, in this regard, Allen and Roberts have included an index to the plants according to color.

As a special bonus, associated with certain plants, under the heading of "Guilds," Allen and Roberts have included images of unique pollinators, and/or interesting insects. For example, in the section on the Milkweed Family (Apocinaceae) we can learn about milkweed bugs, aphids, wood-borer beetles, Dogbane Moths, and two kinds of milkweed butterflies, the Monarch and the Queen. In the Carrot Family (Apiaceae) there is a discussion of different kinds of Swallowtail Butterflies whose larvae feed on members within the family. Birds such as the Cactus Wren, which is associated with various cacti, might also be included in a guild. Also in the cactus guild we learn about Cochineal Insects, various bugs, beetles, and flies. There is also a set of diagrams that help to identify prickly-pear cacti by pad morphology. In association with the California Sycamore there is a discussion of Anthracnose Fungus, pseudoscorpions, Lace Bugs, Twenty-spotted Ladybird Beetles, the Western Tiger Swallowtail, Sycamore Borer Moth, and Anna's Hummingbird. Interestingly, California Sycamore is one of the few trees described in this book. While there are no taxonomic keys, helpful tables and diagrams are included to help with identification. For groups of related species such as the California Lilacs (*Ceanothus* spp.) or Buckwheats (*Eriogonum* spp.) there is an accompanying table that summarizes significant characteristics for each taxon.

Serious botanists will love this new book on Orange County wildflowers. Probably, they will be familiar already with the relatively new classification and arrangement of species into families that is present in the second edition of *The Jepson Manual*. If they have need for a taxonomic key they can use *The Jepson Manual* to identify a plant to species, and then they may refer to the color photographs in Allen and Roberts to verify their identification.



Schoenherr, Allan A. 2012. "Wildflowers of Orange County and the Santa Ana Mountains, by Robert L. Allen and Fred M. Roberts Jr. [Review]." *Crossosoma* 38(2), 85–86.

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