

BOOK REVIEW

Wildflowers of Mammoth Cave National Park. Randy Seymour. 1997. The University Press of Kentucky, Lexington. 254 pp., \$17.95 (flexible). ISBN 0-8131-0898-5.

Immensely popular because of its cave systems, Mammoth Cave National Park of south central Kentucky also includes 53,000 acres of surface landscape. Within the park are diverse forests interrupted by glades, sinkholes, streams, and other microhabitats that harbor a considerable diversity (over 1,000 species) of vascular plants.

This book generally follows the pattern of other illustrated regional wildflower guides. Its 400 color photos, which range from mediocre to very good, are accompanied by descriptions that also are useful for identification. A variety of ethnobotanical and anecdotal information also is given for each.

In organizing field guides, authors have a number of decisions to make, one difficult one being how to sequence the featured species. No method is entirely satisfactory; most work well enough. Though most botanists prefer a taxonomic arrangement, Seymour opted for an initial breakdown by seasons—spring, summer, fall—with flower color categories within each. Of course, this results, to the annoyance of botanists, in closely related species being widely separated from each other. As an example, members of the orchid family are scattered throughout the book.

The appendices include some remarkably useful features. Appendix A presents graphs showing the observed flowering

time for each featured species. Appendix B shows along which of the 28 park trails each species has been found. Combining this information with a trail map available at the visitor's center, one who wishes to observe or photograph a given species should be able to determine both where and when to search.

Book reviewers are generally expected to express some negative comments. Included without explanation among otherwise herbaceous plants are a few woody species such as shrubby St. John's-wort and trumpet creeper; excluded are many other showy flowering shrubs and trees. Absent from the plant descriptions are (except in rare instances) any indication of the habitat requirements of the wildflowers.

Seymour's knowledge and enthusiasm for his subject ("My love affair with wildflowers") is evident throughout the book. Also obvious is the attractive appearance of the volume: high-quality paper and print, and photos protected by a durable flexible cover. The older and larger *Wildflowers and Ferns of Kentucky* (1971) by Mary E. Wharton and Roger W. Barbour, published by the same press, continues to be the most useful guide for most of the state. However, *Wildflowers of Mammoth Cave National Park* certainly is superior for use in the park and adjacent regions.

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