

eggs. Only a single chick that hatched in 2006, however, has survived long enough to fledge, migrate, and pair-bond (in 2009). The story is still unfinished.

This splendid book also has capsule summaries of the other 14 cranes of the world, including detailed range maps and statements regarding their conservation status. It is also decorated with over 80 of the most spectacular crane photographs ever assembled in one place. My only regret about this book is that I hadn't written it! **Paul A. Johnsgard**, *School of Biological Sciences, University of Nebraska–Lincoln*.

Prairie Dogs: Communication and Community in an Animal Society. By C.N. Slobodchikoff, Bianca S. Perla, and Jennifer L. Verdolin. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009. ix + 264 pp. Map, figures, tables, appendix, bibliography, index. \$39.95 cloth.

Prairie dogs (genus *Cynomys*) are midsized ground squirrels and a sentinel of the Great Plains' health. Where there are prairie dogs, there are predators. Where there are prairie dogs, the soil is turned over and aerated. Where there are prairie dogs, plant biodiversity is maintained by their intermittent disturbance. Sadly, prairie dogs are vilified by humans: they are shot, poisoned, drowned, sucked out of their burrows with high powered vacuums, and their habitats paved over and converted to housing and shopping centers. In this book, the authors tell us about their studies of social behavior and communication in Gunnison's prairie dogs, while broadening their story to include information about the other four species—black-tailed, white-tailed, Utah, and Mexican—along with messages about conservation and coexistence. Their admirable intent is to educate people about prairie dogs as a way to help conserve them.

Superficially, the book reads nicely. But digging a bit under the hood, I found that it could have been much better. In many places the authors mix a series of well-supported facts with data from unpublished master's theses based on small sample sizes and with potentially ambiguous results. The book thus alternates between solid science and weak anecdote. The degree to which they cite other relevant literature varies tremendously. I found the section on personalities in prairie dogs, a potentially very interesting topic, exceptionally weak. Had they reviewed the broader literature on animal personality, they could have educated readers about this exciting topic. As written, I fear it may convince some readers that studying nonhuman personalities is a useless endeavor.

The authors also provide a number of "interludes." Some focus on methods of studying prairie dogs, one suggests why it's not a good idea to keep prairie dogs as pets, and an appendix catalogues all of the zoos that have prairie dogs. At times I wondered about their vision of their audience; there is certainly something here for everyone.

The book contains a few minor typos and, in some places, is imprecise. Discriminate function analysis (DFA) is not a statistical program, as claimed on page 73, but an analysis or an algorithm. Soaping is not defined on page 163, when first used, but rather on page 185.

On a more positive note, Table 5.1 offers a wonderful summary of a lot of demographic information, and the economics section, in which the authors try to estimate the economic value of prairie dogs based on various criteria, is exceptionally interesting.

I love prairie dogs and enjoyed reading this book; as a scholarly work, however, it leaves room for improvement. **Daniel T. Blumstein**, *Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, University of California Los Angeles*.

Remarkable Plants of Texas: Uncommon Accounts of Our Common Natives. By Matt Warnock Turner, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009. xvi + 336 pp. Map, photographs, glossary, bibliography, index. \$29.95 cloth.

At last: a book dealing with numerous Texas plants that is neither a field guide nor a dry litany of ethnobotanical uses. *Remarkable Plants of Texas* is an easy, informative, and enjoyable read. Its 65 entries cover over 80 species of some of the most common, well-known, and well-used plants of Texas (many of which also occur in the southeastern or southwestern United States or Mexico). The short (four- to eight-page) chapters are grouped by life form: trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants (also including cacti, grasses, vines, and aquatics). Although most treatments are about a single species, a few cover several species within the same genus, either for reasons of similarity or because of difficulty in distinguishing between species. There is at least one color photograph for every treatment (my only disappointment with the book is that some photographs are poorly focused).

At the beginning of each treatment, the origin of the scientific name is provided along with multiple common names, family, simple description, habitat, and distribution information. While the volume's primary focus is ethnobotanical (prehistoric to present), there is also information on history (both natural and human), culture, wildlife uses, ecology (both at the single species and community level),