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A River Valley Companion: Nature Guide

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Brian Beatte, Brett Dufur : A River Valley Companion: Nature Guide before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A River Valley Companion: Nature Guide:

A nice balance between nature, science and fun. This easy-to-use, richly illustrated four-season guide to the Missouri River valley and surrounding countryside identifies commonly seen trees, flowers, birds, animals, insects, rocks,

fossils, clouds, reptiles, footprints and more. Features the valley's most outstanding sites and nature daytrips.

"Finally! A nature guide for 'the rest of us!' No other book does in one cover what this one will." -- Jim Denny, State Historian
"The River Valley Companion could easily have been titled **ALMOST EVERYTHING YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT AS YOU HIKE THE KATY TRAIL . . . BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK**. The real truth is that you would have had to ask a lot of people with specialized training to get the information that is packed into this dandy little manual. I would certainly want one in my day-pack as I started my journey in this fascinating area of Missouri." -- H. Warrington Williams, Ph.D., Professor of Biology, Westminster College
Going out to enjoy nature in your area, you could take along several books to help you identify flora and fauna, to warn you away from dangers and point out interesting history related to your excursion. Or, you could take this compact volume that answers a great many questions and offers several bonuses. It reviews the ways of the Missouri River, helps you "read" the sky, suggests good destinations, clothing for maximum comfort, how to take pictures and more. There's even a glossary of such words as "bract"-familiar, but perhaps not really understood. As is characteristic of Pebble books, this one has a friendly eagerness to share everything readers might find interesting or useful. For instance, it not only pictures animal tracks, but also lists the colors different species' eyes reflect in light. There are first-aid procedures for snake bites and tips on releasing fish with the least possible injury to them. Illustrations are by Maggie Riesenmy, who is of Cherokee descent. She gives us new respect for how many distinguishing details can be contained in black and white. The writing style is digestible by young people but not too simple for adults. Nature buffs will find much here to enjoy. -- Joan Gilbert, *The Ozarks Mountaineer*, April/May 1998
How often have you been on a hike and asked, "What's that?" Here's a book to answer many of these questions. This book is a beginner's guide to nature. It includes useful information in a simple, easy-to-understand format. Everything has been researched, reviewed and edited to make nature identification as simple as possible. With over 400 illustrations, this book identifies the Missouri River valley's most common species and explains its diverse ecology, past and present. The Missouri River valley--often called a basin, the river bottoms and the floodplain--is the region created by the meanders and cutting of the Missouri River. For this book, we limit our scope of the Missouri River valley within the state of Missouri. We define the river valley as all habitats along the Missouri River, from bluff to bluff plus five miles on either side of the floodplain. Many species found along this valley are also found in other river valley ecosystems, so you will find this book a useful supplement in other areas as well. Beginning naturalists in other Midwestern states would also find this a useful reference. Many of Missouri's other river valleys--such as the Mississippi, Meramec and Gasconade--also host many of the same species we highlight here. Missouri is bordered by more rivers than any other state. Can you name them all? They include the Missouri River, the Mississippi, the St. Francis, the Osage, the Ohio and the Illinois. Within the state, the Missouri River travels more than 550 miles from the western slope at the junction of Kansas, Ohio and Missouri to its confluence with the Mississippi River in St. Charles. In addition to the many towns whose original growth was fostered by early river travel, Missouri's two largest cities--St. Louis and Kansas City--continue to thrive along the banks of the Big Muddy. The Missouri River valley is Missouri's most largely undiscovered gem-in-the-rough. Many naturalists who travel to other states for a respite from the grasp of society would do well to rediscover all that this secluded natural corridor has to offer. It is accessible to more than two-thirds of the state's population in less than one hour, making it the prime place for many Missourians to enjoy nature. Great places to enjoy the river valley are numerous. One of our favorites is the Katy Trail State Park, which winds over 185 miles from St. Charles to Sedalia. In fact, it's America's longest rails-to-trails project, where an old railroad right-of-way was turned into a gorgeous hiking and biking path. The Katy Trail follows the Missouri River from St. Charles in the east to Boonville in the west before departing from the Missouri River valley and heading southwest to Sedalia. In addition to the Katy Trail, more than 70 conservation areas, 17 state parks and the Mark Twain National Forest border the Missouri River valley as well as 27 fishing accesses developed by the Department of Conservation. If you are looking for a great place to enjoy nature, you may be closer than you think. We've included seven nature trips and a complete listing of fishing accesses in the back of the book to give you a great start. This book is very different from other nature guides being published today. On a walk through the woods, many questions often arise. For a long time, if you wanted to learn a little bit more about nature, you would have to arm yourself with at least half a dozen identification guides specializing in different types of plants or animals. Obviously, these specialized reference books are truly the best way to learn a lot about a certain species or region. Yet, there are many more people who need just a little bit of information, a tidbit of trivia or a river valley companion to allow their interests in nature to flourish. This book was written with these people in mind. This book is interactive. Once you find something in the wild, check it off your "life list" in the back. This is a handy way to remember what you have seen. Remember too that there are infinite numbers of natural features in the valley, so you are also likely to find something that is not in this book. Also, remember that nature has a way of confounding us with exceptions. This book, like a good dog, hates being left behind when you go on a hike. The best way to learn more about nature is to get out there and experience it for yourself. Refer to these pages often to learn more about the nature around you. See you there!
From the Back Cover
This easy-to-use guide is the perfect outdoor companion. With more than 400 illustrations, it identifies the most commonly seen nature and

wildlife along the Katy Trail and the Missouri River valley. It includes geology, fossils, trees, wildflowers, vines, ferns, birds, insects, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish, cloud formations, animal tracks and more. Flora and fauna are categorized by color, size and peak sighting season. This book also highlights seven spectacular nature trips to help you get started. Easy explanations, interesting natural history, trivia and a complete glossary and index make this the perfect nature guide for every age and knowledge level.