

WILDFLOWERS OF THE ROCKIES

Rocky Mountain Wild Flowers. A. E. Porsild. 1974. National Museums of Canada. Natural History Series No. 2. 454 pages. \$5 (paper).

Anyone who has visited the Rocky Mountains in summer must cherish memories of the scintillating array of wildflowers that blanket valley and mountain alike. The visitor welcomes a book that offers guidance in identifying these flowers. The book under review, unfortunately, appears inadequate to the task, at least in comparison to other guides available.

There are at least two close competitors of Porsild's book: *A Field Guide to Rocky Mountain Wildflowers*, by Craighead, Craighead, and Davis (in the Roger Tory Peterson series), and *Handbook of Rocky Mountain Plants*, by Ruth Ashton Nelson (published by Dale Stuart King, Tucson). Porsild's guide seems to fare rather poorly in the comparison. He treats in detail only 258 species (and briefly mentions another 180), compared to 590 in the *Field Guide* and more than 900 in the *Handbook*. Porsild restricts coverage mostly to the Rocky Mountains within Alberta; the *Field Guide* covers both Canadian and U.S. Rockies, and the *Handbook* covers the U.S. portion. The botanical and ecological information contained in Porsild's introduction is much skimpier than in the other references.

Perhaps the finest feature of Porsild's book is the presentation of superb color drawings of 258 species, executed by Dagny Tande Lid. The other books feature mostly black-and-white drawings plus color photos of selected species (about 210 in *Field Guide* and 72 in *Handbook*).

A disadvantage of the book under review is the vast amount of wasted space. Many pages are two-thirds or more blank, as a result of having brief plant descriptions on the page facing a drawing of the plant. Finally, the binding and cover are flimsy; the book would not survive many trips up a mountainside.