

Review

Common Lichens of Wisconsin

Reviewed by

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Bennett, J. P. 2017. *Common Lichens of Wisconsin*. 18 pp. 33 color photos, 3 illustrations. Wisconsin State Herbarium, UW-Madison Board of Regents. Limited copies available upon request from the Kenneth Cameron, Herbarium Director, [wis \[kmcameron_at_wisc.edu\]](mailto:wis [kmcameron_at_wisc.edu]). Downloadable at no charge from the Wisconsin State Herbarium website, which can be accessed at <https://herbarium.wisc.edu/research/publications/>



Common Lichens of Wisconsin is the first pocket-guide specifically devoted to Wisconsin lichens and to non-scientists. The book introduces common Wisconsin lichens and aids in their identification, enabling the general public to start identifying common lichens. It contains a one-page description of what lichens are, and a summary of their habits, habitats, and anatomy and reproduction. The book covers 30 of the most commonly collected lichens in Wisconsin and well-represented in the wis herbarium, using color photos by Andrew Khitsun, James P. Bennett and Sarah Friedrich, as well as illustrations by the late Lucy Taylor and by Sarah Friedrich. Each page covers two lichens, and each lichen is accompanied by a photo, a common name and a Latin name, a brief physical and habit description, and the distribution throughout the state. The author also encourages readers to pursue further research by consulting either of the two comprehensive texts that cover the state's lichens (Brodo et al. 2001; Thomson 2003), or to visit the state's Checklist hosted on the *Consortium of North American Lichen Herbaria* website (also by Bennett, <http://lichenportal.org/portal/checklists/checklist.php?cl=112&pid=102>).

This book is a welcome addition to the literature on Wisconsin lichens and in making lichens visible to the general public. It fills the void in needing an accessible Wisconsin lichen pocket-guide that anyone can understand and easily use. Prior to this, casual students of Wisconsin lichens would need to

use field-guides tailored to neighboring states, provinces or regions. These guides do not state which lichens one is most likely to encounter in Wisconsin. Previously, lichenology students could use *Lichens of Wisconsin* by the late John W. Thomson (2003), but they would need to find alternate texts in order to view illustrations or images of the lichens themselves; alternatively they could have used *Lichens of North America* (Brodo et al. 2003); however, this text is not comprehensive of Wisconsin taxa. The *Common Lichens of Wisconsin* make 30 of the most commonly collected lichens (four crustose, 16 foliose, and ten fruticose) accessible to the reader. That four crustose lichens are included in a guide for casual lichen observers is a positive move in educating the public about these commonly overlooked lichens in general.

One might be confused to find that the “common” lichens included in this publication are not necessarily the lichens most commonly encountered in Wisconsin. Of the 30 included lichens, 22 (73%) are found statewide, while 8 (27%) are found only in northern Wisconsin with minor exceptions. This is most likely due to the habits and preferences of lichenologists who tend to voucher the collections they make in northern Wisconsin. The lichen territory of northern Wisconsin offers unique ecosystems shaped by geologic and climatic processes that lead to an increase in lichen diversity and numbers not found outside of this region. This region is also ideal for collecting lichens in that it is

the least populated and least altered by human activity, such as air and agricultural pollution. As a result, the non-scientist and casual student who look to identify the lichens they most often encounter might sometimes be frustrated by the selection of lichens included in this booklet. Other minor drawbacks to this field-guide include the lack of photo scale-bars and the absence of references to other common lichens that might be confused with the included taxa. Most likely, the author did not intend to provide this level of comprehensiveness in the production of a simple pocket-guide.

The publication of *Common Lichens of Wisconsin* is a welcome addition in making Wisconsin lichens identifiable and familiar to the non-scientist. The best part of the booklet is that it encourages the audience to start seeing and identifying lichens, and to explore the world of lichens in general.

LITERATURE CITED

- Brodo, I. M., S. D. Sharnoff & S. Sharnoff. 2001. Lichens of North America. Yale University Press, New Haven and London.
- Thomson, J. W. 2003. Lichens of Wisconsin. Wisconsin State Herbarium, Madison.