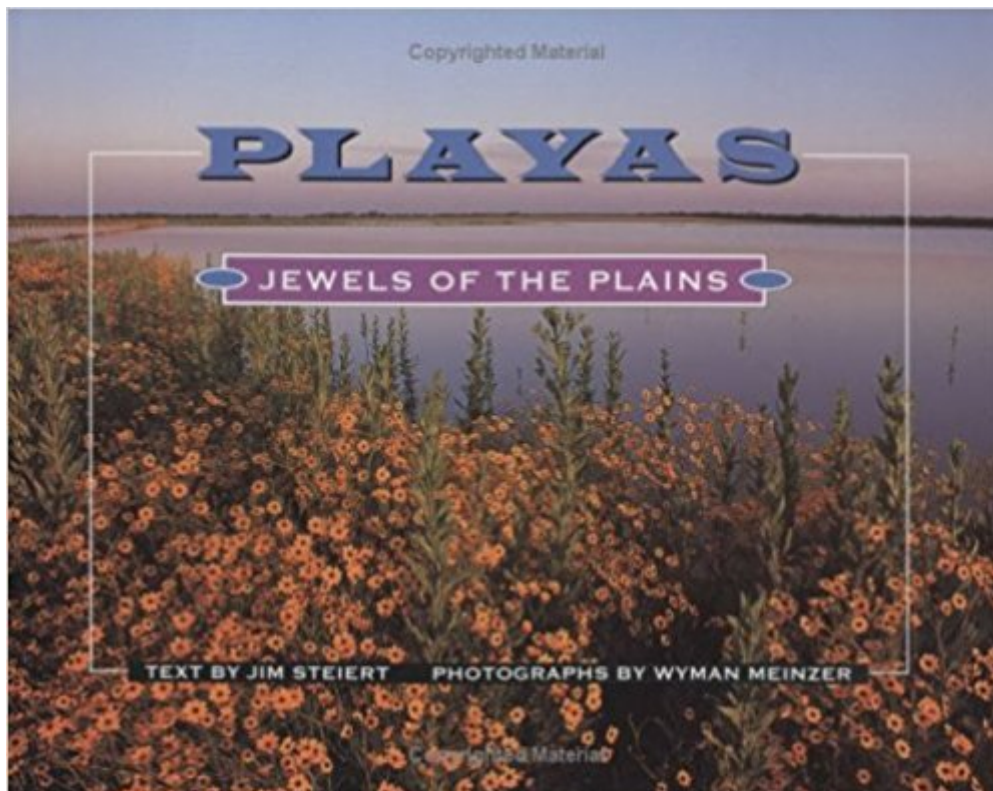


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Playas: Jewels Of The Plains



Synopsis

Folks who live on the plains of Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Kansas, and Colorado call them playa lakes. Sometimes, depending on the rainfall, these drainage basins fill and truly take on the personality of small lakes. At other times, when the sun is hot and rain is just a memory, these wind-dished catchments are just so much baked earth and brown vegetation. Steiert calls the playas "a priceless resource." He writes: "Something about playas nurtures the spirit. Perhaps it is the truly wild abundance that springs from the gooey clay muck where we dare not drive our tractors. We need these pools of diverse life in an environment as unforgiving as the Plains can be." In this book Steiert examines the history of playas and the roles they play in life on the Llano Estacado. He explains how and why playas exist and the controversy they generate. He takes a look at the laws that govern the playas and at the wildlife that populates them. He writes eloquently of the beauty of the playas and the respect he has for them. Illustrated with 75 color photographs by award-winning photographer Wyman Meinzer, Playas is a book for everyone who has gazed out across the horizon and admired the jewels of the plains. For all their abundance on the Llano Estacado, it would seem the playas are little appreciated for what they represent. In a region where land is dedicated almost exclusively to growing cotton and wheat, corn, sorghum, and cattle, the playas have too long been considered an inconvenience, even a liability. In their wet state, they must be worked around or turned short of with the tractor. When sufficiently dry to cultivate, they are subject to flooding and its accompanying crop loss, erosion, and invasion by noxious weeds. The unending quest for a form of productivity to be measured by the scales of a grain elevator or cotton gin has eliminated much of what is wild from the plains.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Playa lakelands of Texas, Kansas and Colorado have the unique feature of being changing environments which support a diverse range of creatures as they change from lake to arid environments. Enjoy a fine title which examines the ecosystems and changing worlds of the playa.

-- Midwest Book Review

The High Plains is classified as a semiarid region meaning water is scarce. But in a "good" year as you fly over the region and look down on the flat land passing beneath - something catches your eye - scattered across the land are glimmering jewels that are created by the sun's rays bouncing off water. These are playa lakes. Although most are ephemeral, these shallow rain-fed catchments are extremely important to the existence of life on the High Plains. Through words and photographs Playas explores the complexities of the relationship between these lakes and life on the High Plains. Both the author and photographer grew up well aware of the importance of these lakes as well as the joys, sorrows, and controversy they create. Steiert and Meinzer transform their intimate knowledge of the rhythm of life on the Plains and the role playas play within that rhythm into a moving tribute to the land and its wildlife.

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