



Baboquivari Mountain Plants Identification, Ecology, and Ethnobotany

Daniel F Austin

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The Sky Islands of southern Arizona and northwestern Mexico make up a region that is rich, both biologically and culturally. These isolated mountain ranges, separated by desert “seas,” contain a unique and diverse flora and have long been home to indigenous peoples of the southwestern US. This book, *Baboquivari Mountain Plants: Identification, Ecology, and Ethnobotany*, details the flora and ethnobotany of the westernmost of these mountain ranges. The mountains form the boundary between the Sonoran and Chihuahuan floristic regions, containing species from both provinces, along with elements from both the Petran and Madrean Montane Coniferous Forest provinces. The result is a very high diversity of plant species for the relatively small amount of land area. The mountains are sacred to the Tohono O’odham people, whose lands include all of the western slopes. The author has done extensive research, beginning with his own field surveys and later compiling information from numerous sources, both published and unpublished. The result is a beautiful volume containing a wealth of information on plants of the Baboquivari Mountains and their significance to native peoples.

The book begins with a preface describing the author’s background and personal experience with the Baboquivari Mountains. This is followed by an introduction to the region, a chapter on history and settlement by both Native Americans and Europeans, a table of linguistic relationships of indigenous peoples, and a pronunciation guide for their languages. The bulk of the volume is made up of 254 pages of common species

accounts, organized alphabetically by family and then by genus. Each account contains a botanical illustration, all known common names along with their etymology, the species description, habitat, range, ecology, seasonality, and an extensive section on human uses. Various miscellaneous tidbits on related species are also included. An appendix lists all known plant species of the Baboquiveri Mountains as of July 2008.

My one criticism of the book is the lack of a good map. A small map of the region is included in the introduction, but the detail is very limited. I would have liked a full-page map showing the position of the BLM wilderness, as well as canyons mentioned in the text, such as the Fresnal and Thomas canyons. It would also have been helpful for readers outside of Arizona to have included a small map of Arizona counties, as these are listed for the species’ ranges. Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed perusing this book, learning the history of the region as well as many interesting facts and uses of the plants. My interest has been piqued, and I hope to visit this unique mountain range in the near future. I anticipate that the book would be of great value to anyone desiring to know more of the botany, history, and indigenous uses of plants in this distinctive region.

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