Preface

As many images come to mind when "wetland" is spoken as there are people hearing the word. Some think of the beautiful marshes of northern Iowa; some think of backwater areas along the Mississippi; some think of that wet place in the field they can't farm certain years; some think of a place to hunt ducks; some think of a mosquito-infested swamp they visited at camp; some think of an area going to waste unless it can be drained.

We slowly caught on to the fact that wetlands have great ecologic and economic value and began to pass laws to protect them against further loss. As our understanding deepened, we even began to restore wetlands, to bring back places of recreation, of water storage, of wildlife habitat—of beauty.

With the increasing awareness of the importance of wetlands, a book was needed to help the nonspecialist understand how wetlands are classified and to aid in the identification of wetland plants. There are wonderful taxonomic books available; however, they are often so technical that all but professional taxonomists become discouraged. These manuals are often regional in scope and contain many plants that do not occur in the local area. This tends to frustrate many users, particularly beginners. We think wetlands are grand places. We want you to enjoy them as we do. Hence, we offer this book as a starting place for those who wish to learn more about Iowa's wetlands and wetland plants.

Wetlands are a valuable resource, but one that many people do not visit. They possess a beauty often not appreciated by anyone but hunters, trappers, a few photographers, or recreationists on the larger lakes. This book is designed to point out the diversity of wetland types in our state. It also may be of value in assisting those persons involved in implementing the regulatory aspects of wetland protection—specifically Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act. We hope environmental consultants will find it useful in their task of wetland delineation.

Plant descriptions are presented by habitat (terrestrial or aquatic), then refined by habit (e.g., emergent, floating, or

submerged) or by taxonomic group (e.g., ferns and allies or trees, shrubs, and vines). Common names vary throughout the country, so we have included those in frequent use, although others may be used regionally or locally. We have also included the plant's scientific name, along with the authority.

While knowledge of this two-name system of naming plants is not necessary for the enjoyment of wetland plants, the system is useful and practical. The first name, the genus name (plural: genera), applies to a group of closely related species. The family name (example: Cyperaceae) indicates a group of closely related genera. The scientific name, generally derived from Latin or Greek, is often descriptive of the plant.

We hope the pictures, contributed by many photographers, along with the description of the plant and some information about its uses will increase the enjoyment of visitors to Iowa's wetlands and will entice newcomers to get to know these priceless areas. We further hope that teachers will use this book to become acquainted with wetlands and wetland plants and gain the confidence to visit wetlands with their classes. With the resurgence of interest in uses of native plants for medicines, we felt it important to include information on uses of wetland plants by Native Americans and early pioneers.

A wetland experience can be exhilarating with proper preparation; it can also be disappointing and uncomfortable without proper attire or with bad timing. Mosquitoes do like wetlands, the humidity can be high and uncomfortable, and you can sink up to your knees in muck. But wetlands can also be among the most treasured places on earth. They are incomparably beautiful at dawn when the grebes and yellow-headed blackbirds are calling, the lotus is in bloom, the iris is at its peak, and hardly a ripple moves along the surface of the water. Or, just at sunset a fog may settle over the marsh and the cool damp air envelopes you and the distinctive smell pervades the air. Experience this and you will agree with us—these are grand places.

ARRANGEMENT OF THE BOOK

Nomenclature and common names follow Eilers and Roosa (1994), except for some cases wherein common names were taken from *Flora of the Great Plains* (1986).

A description of Iowa's wetlands, along with illustrations, serves to introduce readers to the topic of wetland botany. An attempt was made to include a photograph of each type of wetland found in Iowa so users can affix a name to a wetland they may be visiting.

Species' descriptions are grouped by the habitat in which they occur or by the separation of a major group of plants. Species appear in alphabetical order by common name for smaller groups, like the ferns and trees; they appear in the approximate order of flowering in the section on terrestrial flowering herbs.

Examples: Duckweeds are found in the section on plants growing in water; silver maple is found in the section on trees, shrubs, and vines; marsh marigold is found early in the section on herbs of terrestrial habitats; closed gentian is found late in this same section.