



Regional Botany Special Lecture



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Bell Museum

Minnesota natural history: Pretty good, not bad, or just different?

North America's three largest biomes meet in Minnesota. The north woods of the boreal zone, the prairies of the west, and the eastern deciduous forests intersect here. Our mid-continental location has a climate of extremes- hot summers bringing humidity from the gulf and legendary winters of arctic temperatures. The southern, eastern and western boundaries of Minnesota biomes reflect these extremes and are already responding to the effects of greenhouse gas emissions on climate. Change is perhaps more evident here than in many places.

But drama isn't new to Minnesota. Glacial cycles, ancient seas, a mid-continental rift with massive lava flows, a fossil record of how early photosynthesis changed Earth's atmosphere, and the oldest rock exposures in North America. It's all right here in fly-over country. How plants responded to these events offer deep lessons from the past and hope for the future.

George D. Weiblen is the Science Director of the at the. He holds a Distinguished McKnight University Professorship in Plant & Microbial Biology and is a curator of the herbarium at the Bell Museum of Natural History. He received his B.A. in Biology from Reed College in 1992 and his Ph.D. in Organismic and Evolutionary Biology from Harvard University in 1999, advised by Michael J. Donoghue. His research interests include the ecology and evolution of plant-insect interactions, especially pollinators and herbivores of trees in Papua New Guinea. His systematic studies focus on Ficus, Moraceae and relatives. He also maintains the first Drug Enforcement Administration permit for Cannabis genetic research in the United States. Born and raised in Minnesota, he has participated in the design and content of the new Bell Museum + Planetarium in Saint Paul.