

## Book review

### **Oak Origins: From Acorns to Species and the Tree of Life**

**Andrew L. Hipp, 2024. Illustrations by Rachel D. Davis**

**Foreword by Béatrice Chassé**

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M. Socorro González-Elizondo\*

*Instituto Politécnico Nacional, CIIDIR Durango, Sigma No. 119, Fracc. 20 de Noviembre II, 34234 Durango, Dgo., Mexico*

\*Corresponding author: [herbario\\_ciidir@yahoo.com.mx](mailto:herbario_ciidir@yahoo.com.mx) (M.S. González-Elizondo)

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*Oak Origins: From Acorns to Species and the Tree of Life*, published in December 2024, is Andrew Hipp's most recent book. Portraying oaks as a doorway to understanding the rest of organisms and using data on their history, present and future, he guides us to comprehend evolutionary mechanisms at all levels, lean out on the surprising interconnections of the web of life and, ultimately, to have a glimpse of our own -human beings- future.

Combining rigorously written science with a sensory imagination, Hipp makes you feel immersed, witnessing events, places and ages in total wonder and delight. Through these journeys, the scientific interest in evolution, genomics, phylogeny, systematics or ecology becomes one with the passionate naturalist in all of us.

The book is illustrated by the fine art of Rachel D. Davis with 43 mid-tones watercolor and opens through a charming foreword by Béatrice Chassé. Enjoyable from the first to the last sentence, this is already a jewel of the science popularization in Biology.

Warning: better to refrain from marking texts or bookmarking pages because when you see the next part you feel tempted to mark it too, and the rest, and the rest...

Dr. Andrew Hipp is a scientist, writer and science communicator. He is the Herbarium Director and senior scientist in the Morton Arboretum, where he directs research on the systematics, evolution and ecological implications of plant diversity. He is also a lecturer at the University of Chicago. He has published more than 130 scientific papers and chapter books, 16 children's

books, and communicate through workshops and his blog *A Botanist's Field Notes*.

The content of the book is as follows: Foreword: Figuring things out, by Béatrice Chassé; Introduction: What is an oak? Chapter 1. Flowers and acorns: populations arise and migrate; Chapter 2. Variation:

populations evolve; Chapter 3. Species and their hybrids; Chapter 4. Origins: Fagaceae; Chapter 5. Radiation: *Quercus*; Chapter 6. “Pharaoh’s Dance”: The oak genome; Chapter 7. Oak communities; Epilogue: The future of oaks; Acknowledgments; Appendix: Oak names.