Bookreview

T. PÓCS, T. SIMON, Z. TUBA and J. PODANI (eds.)

PROCEEDINGS OF THE IAB CONFERENCE ON BRYOLOGY

Symposia Biologica Hungarica 35, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest 1987, XIX + 901 (Two volumes)

During the last 20 years non-taxonomic disciplines within bryology have been growing rapidly; among other fields, bryophyte ecology became one of the fastest to develop. In 1985, I.A.B. (International Association of Bryologists) convened a symposium devoted solely to this subject, which was held in Budapest. The reviewed volume contains all lectures presented at the symposium.

Two respectable volumes together of more than 900 pages contain 72 papers, which are divided into six sections, each of them edited by a separate editor. Though positions of some contributions within this structure might be quite variable, this division gives a reader a good overview of the range of topic presented at the Symposium.

These sections include Physiological ecology (edited by M.C.F. PROCTOR), Reproduction and dispersal ecology (edited by H. J. DURING), Community ecology (edited by N. G. SLACK), Population ecology (edited by R. WYATT), Bryophytes in ecosystems (edited by R. E. LONGTON) and Bryophytes as bioindicators (edited by J. SAROSIEK).

The emergence of such a book necessarily invokes comparison with SMITH's book on the subject (SMITH A. J. E., (ed.), *Bryophyte ecology*, Chapman and Hall, 1982). This book put the main emphasis on such fields as physiological ecology and sociology, whereas the reviewed volume covers diverse "ecological" subjects ranging from phytogeography and sociology to production ecology, population biology and genetics. Though it is hard to compare a volume of symposium proceedings with a carefully planned and edited compendium, their differences may still reflect the range of understanding of the term "ecology" within a bryological community (and not only there). The main difference is still a rather broad coverage of population biology, reproduction and dispersal ecology by the Budapest symposium. This approach might represent an intermediate between traditional sociology and physiological ecology, and offers an interesting interface to taxonomy through population genetics, which actually forms a major part of the population ecology section (Reproduction and dispersal processes, i.e. population ecology s.str., forms a separate section!). In addition, it calls for a new experimental approach in studying bryophyte ecology.

On the other hand, the book reflects some current problems in bryophyte ecology: first, a too vague understanding of the subject, where almost everything except herbarium taxonomy may be included, second, rather poor communication between laboratory and field disciplines, and, third, a tendency to duplicate research done with higher plants (or even animals). Maybe, bryophyte ecology is still in its pre-paradigmatic stage.

Apart from this, the proceedings volumes are certainly going to be an important book in the field. The editors and organizers of the conference are to be congratulated.

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