

having family and genus names as running heads on facing pages. Errors seem to be very few; where they do occur, they tend to be major howlers, such as the citation of *Cotoneaster humifusa* as a synonym of *Taraxacum hamatiforme*, on p. 236 and in the index, as well as what is presumably its rightful place, on p. 139.

Already the British Herbarium at the Natural History Museum has been re-arranged according to this work and doubtless other curators will follow its example. It does not solve every problem, especially for the more casual aliens, on which information is often wanting. Attractively enclosed within a laminated cover depicting the BSBI's symbol, *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, 'Kent' is an accurate enumeration of the British flora in the 1990s and will be the standard reference list for British botanists and plant ecologists for some time to come (though I suspect not another 35 years).

REFERENCES

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- Dandy, J. E. (1958). *List of British vascular plants*. London: British Museum.
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An Annotated Catalogue of the Vascular Plants of Oman and their Vernacular Names. Shahina A. Ghazanfar. Meise: National Botanic Garden of Belgium. 1992. Pp. 153. ISBN 90-72619-08-0. Forming Scripta Botanica Belgica 2. 1600 Belgian Francs.

Until recently the flora of the Sultanate of Oman was largely unknown, but extensive botanical exploration over the last twenty years has revealed a surprisingly rich flora, with a large number of endemic species, particularly in the southern province of Dhofar. As the author states in her introduction, this *Catalogue* is the first comprehensive list of the flowering plants and ferns found in Oman and lists an impressive 1174 species - exclusive of cultivated plants. Species are listed by family, together with brief descriptions and notes on habitat and distribution; there are also some diagnostic keys. Representative collections are cited and vernacular names are given using a simplified, and therefore accessible, system of transliteration into English.

As a compilation of published and unpublished plant names related to the Oman flora this *Catalogue* succeeds quite well. It appears to cover all major collections and I have found comparatively few omissions. The nomenclature is up-to-date and the author has been assiduous in picking up recent names, including those very recently published such as *Sporobolus gloeocladus*. There is no doubt that this *Catalogue* will be an essential source of reference for all those studying the Oman flora until the publication of the new, comprehensive, Flora of Arabia.

However, to be really reliable, a checklist must be based on thorough taxonomic research, and it is in this area that I have some misgivings. It seems that collector's lists have been accepted uncritically and little or no research into the specimens has been made. I am not certain whether the many species identified only to genus represent

different species or merely undetermined material. Provisional names such as *Commelina ussilensis* and *Ruellia pallida* have been included when they almost certainly do not apply to Oman plants. I spotted several examples of misidentifications: *Bentia fruticulosa* is *Justicia bentii* and not *J. calyculata*; *Grewia damine* is a recently revived name for *G. tiliifolia*, a Sri Lankan and Indian species unknown from Arabia and certainly not the correct name for *G. bicolor*.

The main problem, however, lies with the keys. The provision of keys appears to be random; there are none at all for the monocotyledons, nor for quite large dicotyledonous genera such as *Pulicaria* and *Tribulus*, while they are provided for small, relatively simple genera such as *Hyoscyamus*. The keys themselves are often not strictly dichotomous and the couplets do not balance. Characters selected to distinguish species or species groups are quite often unsound. In the key to *Fagonia*, for instance, no mention is made of the ternate leaves of *F. schweinfurthii* even though they are the sole diagnostic character; instead reliance is placed on stem indumentum, branching and on the annual/perennial habit, even though none of these characters are of use in distinguishing the species. Similar problems may be found in the keys to *Corchorus*, *Sida*, and many other genera.

The *Catalogue* is technically well-produced, with clear print on high-quality paper. Only in the key to *Indigofera* has the author been let down by poor lay-out. It is, therefore, rather unfortunate that the publishers did not have the text refereed more critically for its taxonomic content, as this is a book which undoubtedly fills an important gap in our understanding of the Arabian flora.

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Vergleichende Chorologie der Zentraleuropäischen Flora. Band III. Ed. H. Meusel & E.J. Jäger. Gustav Fischer Verlag, Jena, Stuttgart, New York. 1992. 2 parts: part 1 (text) pp ix + 333; part 2 (maps and references) pp ix + 266, including 556 maps. ISBN 3-334-00411-2. DM 560.

The first part of this massive, perhaps over-ambitious, reference work was published in 1965, the second in 1978, and with the appearance of the third volume the project is now complete. Any detailed scientific project that spans almost 30 years requires, apart from substantial funding, enormous dedication on the part of the author(s) and the fact that this has now come to a successful conclusion is a great tribute to Professor Meusel and his co-workers at Hallé, especially Drs Jäger and Weinert. A review of the second volume (in *Notes RBG Edinb.* 37: 326, 1979) gave a general indication of the scope and aims of *Vergleichende Chorologie* and emphasised its value to anyone, in any part of the world, who was interested in patterns of plant distribution and wider aspects of geobotany. Although the title of the work gives the impression of a primarily central European bias, the distribution maps and complementary data presented are of cosmopolitan interest. Volume 3, covering such families as Rubiaceae, Campanulaceae and Compositae, contains some 550 distribution maps and deals with c. 2000 taxa. There are numerous (even more than in earlier volumes) total-range maps of genera, e.g.