

Øvstedal, D.O., Lewis Smith, R.I.: **Lichens of Antarctica and South Georgia**. A Guide to their Identification and Ecology. - Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2001. 411 pp. GBP 70.00, USD 100.00. ISBN 0-521-66241-9.

This is the first comprehensive account of the lichens growing in Antarctica and in the sub-Antarctic island South Georgia, based on modern taxonomical approach and supplemented with useful information on environmental conditions in their habitats. The book is introduced by a short survey of climatic and biotic features of different biogeographic zones (continental, maritime, and sub-Antarctic) within the Antarctic territory. Quite interesting is also historical view of lichenological investigations in Antarctica, description of the present state of the taxonomic survey and location of major Antarctic lichen collections.

The next chapter is devoted to the description of basic ecological features of the lichen-dominated communities, including climatic and geochemical characteristics of all important types of their habitats, together with data on diversity of the lichen biota. A checklist with geographical distribution of all known Antarctic lichens is given in an extensive table. Data on lichen species recorded in climatically extreme habitats (above 2000 m altitude, south of 80°S latitude) are presented in several satellite tables.

The main body of the book contains detail systematic description of all known genera and species found in Antarctica and South Georgia with useful comments on their distribution and ecology. Very practical artificial keys to genera are provided for each morphological group (crustose, fruticose, foliose, leprose, granulose and

sorediate). Keys to species determination within each genus are also included. Most of the typical species and habitats are depicted in more than one hundred colour plates, which are also very helpful in determination of lichens in the field by non-specialists. Glossary of special terms used in lichenology, references to the vast majority of publications relevant to lichens of Antarctica, and index of all mentioned taxa are provided in the final sections.

The book is technically perfectly produced, richly illustrated and bound in an attractive hard cover. It is a really nice new contribution to series of practical publications "Studies in Polar Research". This volume is a truly indispensable source of information for all biologists studying terrestrial biota of Antarctic continent and of adjacent islands, as well as for lichenologists not specialised on polar research, because many of the described species had wide distribution beyond the Antarctic region and can be encountered in many other corners of the world.

The book is written by a simple, clear and deliberately brief style but, on the other hand, it provides sufficient descriptive details. This is why I may recommend the book not only to specialists as a new starting point for more advanced studies, but also to students and to other non-specialists interested in the fascinating world of lichens.

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