

Book Review

Bill Malcolm & Nancy Malcolm 2000. Mosses and Other Bryophytes. An Illustrated Glossary. 220 pages, 968 color photos, 22 line drawings, 15 x 22 cm, hardcover. ISBN 0-473-06730-7. Price \$39.95 plus shipping and handling.

A Micro-Optics Press publication available from Timber Press Inc., 133 S.W. Second Avenue, Suite 450, Portland, OR 97204-3527. www.timberpress.com, e-mail: publicity@timberpress.com. In Europe from Timber Press, Inc., 2 Station Road, Swavesey, Cambridge CB4 5QJ, England.

This book is absolutely unique in several respects. There exists bryological glossaries, usually in bryophyte floras. Most have no figures to illustrate the terms, and some have few drawings. And there exists the “Glossarium Polyglottum Bryologicae” published by the Missouri Botanical Garden, which is comprehensive but lacks any figures. Everybody having held identification courses in bryology knows the problems of beginners, who does not know what to imagine under terms, which are in common use in bryology, and even explanations in a glossary can give the beginner no real idea. This book gives an enumeration and definition of thousands of terms and illustrates hundreds. A publication of such a book would never have been possible if the authors would not have produced and published it by themselves but made it available through a well known publisher in the US. This is remarkable in so far as many books are no more written today because they would never find a publisher. I like to argue that such an illustrated glossary for bryology would never have been published in Europe. Perhaps a coffee table book on bryophytes, but this should include lichens and ferns as well to get more potential buyers. Bill and Nancy Malcolm show the alternative, also to prepare such a book digitally. The glossary is one but in my opinion the minor point. This book will be bought not because of the glossary but because of its illustrations. It is

the number and the quality of pictures, which makes this book so valuable. There are hardly any other books containing 968 colour photos. But what pictures! I was prepared to this kind of pictures since I had the great chance that Bill and Nancy Malcolm gave us a taste of these pictures when we stayed in New Zealand during the fieldwork for our BRYO AUSTRAL project. I must say that I am photographing bryophytes since my school time and my pictures are surely not bad. There are also other bryology books with illustrations in the world such as the Mosses, Lichens and Ferns of Northwest North America, Zen Iwatsuki’s book in Japanese bryophytes and ferns, some books in Europe in lichens, bryophytes and ferns or bryophytes on ferns (all never exclusively on bryophytes, see above) or Tomas Hallingbäcks on Scandinavian bryophytes, but none of these books (although all pretty well illustrated) reach the quality of the pictures of Bill Malcolm. He has developed an own style, which I named “bryo-art”. It is a combination of absolutely perfectly sharp pictures, with every detail in the field of depth, special arrangements of plants, sporophytes, capsules, a perfect and consistent exposure, extreme close ups (the objects are often seen as under a hand lens) and remarkable plastic illumination. The pictures are mostly taken in the lab, which allows this style and perfectionism. The special arrangements reduce everything to

the point. The perfection concerns also the many micro-photographs. Only everybody who has attempted to make microphotographs has an idea how perfect these are: everything is sharp, the backgrounds are clean, there is no dirt, no bubble in the slide. The coloured interference contrast makes the microphotographs to art. As well as the close ups, these objects could be hung up magnified at the wall. So simply turning over the leaves, looking at the photographs, is a delight. The price is not just low especially outside the US but the number of pictures alone will justify

it, the enjoyment received through this book is certainly a reason to buy it and also knowledge that this book is absolutely unique in its style and the quality of the pictures.

The only weak point in my eyes is the title, which sounds somewhat unusual at least for bryologists. The purpose of the book is only expressed in the subtitle, and mosses and other bryophytes sounds like dicots and other flowering plants. An illustrated glossary of bryophytes would have made more sense, but perhaps not so much buyers.

Jan-Peter Frahm