



## BOOK REVIEW

Review of *Botanical excursions on the northern Sørøya (Finnmark, Norway)*, edited by N. Koroleva, E. Borovichev, A. Melekhin and Tom E. Ness (2013). Hammerfest: Grafika AS. 111 pp. ISBN 978-82-93396-01-7. (Available for free at <http://kpabg.ru/?q=node/378>)

Hammerfest, in the far north of Norway and nearly 1000 km above the Arctic Circle, is rightly proud of its nature. One of the most beautiful and best preserved areas may be found on the large island of Sørøya, ca 15 km west of the city. In 2011, ecologists of the city together with scientists from the Polar–Alpine Botanical Garden and Institute in Kirovsk, Russia, embarked upon a survey of the botanical richness of the northern part of the island. They produced this book as a guide to its main vegetation types, plants and lichens, and to increase public awareness of its beauty, diversity and fragility.

The first chapter provides elementary knowledge of the geology, physical geography and climate of Sørøya; of nomenclature of plants and vegetation types; and a brief survey of the major vegetation zones on the island. In subsequent chapters, these zones are described in more detail.

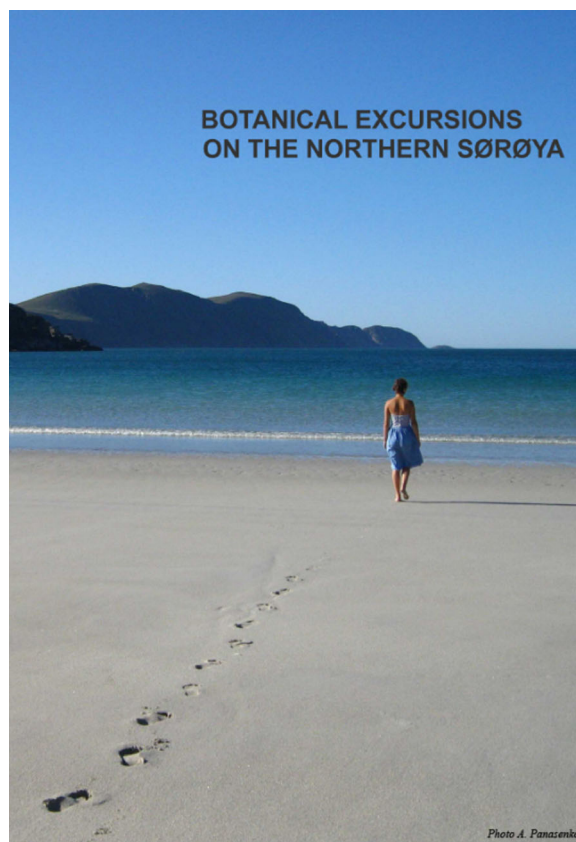
Even at this latitude (ca 71°N), the lower parts of the island are covered with birch forest. The tundra vegetation of the alpine belt is characterized by a large number of dwarf shrubs, bryophytes and lichens. Large parts of the coastal zone and the mountain slopes are covered with various types of meadow and grassland, which people on the island use for sheep grazing and hay production.

The next three chapters deal with mires, seashore vegetation and communities on bare rocks, followed by a short discussion of history and extent of human activities on the island and their effects on flora and vegetation. The final two chapters are devoted to bryophytes and lichens, so important in boreal and Arctic ecosystems, and give an overview of the most important species in the different vegetation zones. The book ends with an index of plant and lichen names, and a short list of literature and Internet sources for further information.

The book is lavishly illustrated, with colour photographs on almost every page. The pictures of the plants should be a great help in putting names to plants

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encountered in the field. The text is concise, lively and full of interesting details. I especially liked the short notes on ecological roles and traditional uses by man which accompany the pictures of many plant species.

Inevitably, there are a few critical notes. The English is not perfect, although the text is fully understandable. Especially in the pictures of bryophytes and lichens, an indication of their size (i.e., the scale of the picture) might have been helpful—for people not acquainted with these organisms, it will not always be easy to visually match the species in the field with the photographs. Overall, though, this guidebook is highly recommended to everyone wishing to better understand and, in effect, see more of the ecology of the island, its zonation, its plants and vegetation types and their ecological links. While the book focuses on Sørøya, text and figures are readily applicable in a much wider context and may be useful all over northern Fennoscandia and Russia.