

BOOK REVIEW

Lichens of South Australia. Rex B. Filson and Roderick W. Rogers. Handbooks of the Flora and Fauna of South Australia. Government Printer, South Australia. 1979. 197 pp., 28 b.&w. figures, 16 col. plates, 21 x 15 cm. Price \$10.50.

Of all the plant groups to which botanists and naturalists have longed for a handbook, it is lichens where the need has been most acutely felt. This book, the first lichen flora of any usefulness in Australia, will fortunately be useful outside as well as within the State of South Australia, since the authors have prudently incorporated many species from adjacent states whose future discovery in South Australia might be expected.

The Handbook covers something like 250-300 lichens, some in great detail, others only at generic level depending on the state of knowledge of the group concerned. It therefore covers virtually all the lichens that are identifiable without further research; for the most part this means "crustose lichens . . . to generic level and the fruticose and foliose lichens to specific level". There are keys to families and to genera within families, using fertile material, and a further key to genera which places more emphasis on vegetative characters. Within each genus there is a key to species, if appropriate, and brief descriptions; as an aid to further work there are short lists of specimens examined.

For a great many species some kind of illustration is provided — either a photograph or, at least, a drawing of the ascospores. The book is clearly aimed primarily at non-lichenologists in the hope of inducing others to take up this fascinating and beautiful group of plants. It is therefore a pity that the lichenological jargon — which is perhaps the most rampant of any area of botany — had not been more muted. It is essential for any newcomer to the group to acquire a knowledge of the appropriate terminology but there is little excuse for "primuline-yellow", "pseudoperithecia" (not defined), "epiphloic" as well as "corticolous", and "endophloic" where the glossary gives "endophloedal". Despite these, no botanist should have difficulty in using the book. Both keys and descriptions seem clear and unambiguous and there are sufficient illustrations to be of great help. There are 28 pages of line drawings and black and white photographs, mostly clear, and 16 plates of what would have been, from the originals by Bruce Fuhrer, superb colour photographs but for the printing. When, oh when, is the scientific public going to be released from the incubus of Government Printers? The colour reproductions would reflect no particular credit on one of the cheaper weekly magazines produced for public consumption and the type faces used throughout are — to my eyes — both antique and ugly. It is a shame that a book, whose publication reflects so much credit on the State of South Australia should have been produced in so unworthy a manner. Perhaps the answer is that for \$10.50 one must not cavil, but competent printing ought to cost no more than incompetent, and even an extra dollar or so would have been worth paying to have accurate colours in the *Parmelia* plates, where colour is a critical characteristic; not many species, in my experience, are a muddy submarine blue.

These criticisms aside, the book is neatly produced, a handy size, and cheap, and it can be expected to have a wide market in Australasia. It may well trigger off a much-needed revival in lichenology in Australia and certainly deserves to. The authors are to be warmly commended on their work and no self-respecting field botanist or botanical library should be without it.

GEORGE A.M. SCOTT

BOOK NOTICE

Descriptive notes on Papuan Plants, by Ferdinand von Mueller, parts 1 to 9, first published by the Government Printer, Melbourne, in 1875 to 1890, is now available in a limited facsimile edition produced in 1979 by Boerhaave Press, P.O. Box 1051, Leiden, Holland (Price Dutch florins 125). The facsimile edition is enhanced by the addition of an index to parts 6 to 9 — only parts 1 to 5 were indexed in the original.



Scott, G A M. 1980. "Book review: Lichens of South Australia. Rex B. Filson and Roderick W. Rogers." *Muelleria: An Australian Journal of Botany* 4(3), 295–295.
<https://doi.org/10.5962/p.238391>.

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