BOOK REVIEW

Brown, Gary, Mies, Bruno, A.: VEGETATION ECOLOGY OF SOCOTRA – Springer, 2012, volume: 7, 379 p., ISBN: 978-94-007-4140-9

Yemeni island of Socotra is a part of a remote archipelago, situated east of the Horn of Africa. Continental drift during the Tertiary period made it one of the most amazing and highly biodiverse islands in the world. Not by chance, Socotra became a UNESCO Man and Biosphere Reserve in 2003 and a World Heritage Site in 2008. For its mysterious landscapes and very high level of endemism, the island attracts scientists, adventurers and tourists from around the world. Although its unique natural heritage has received much attention in last twenty years, knowledge of vegetation ecology is far from comprehensive.

Authors of the publication capitalised on a large amount of knowledge and field experience in the Arabian Peninsula to write a book titled "Vegetation Ecology of Socotra" published in 2012 by Springer. It is a comprehensive study covering topics such as biogeography, ecology, evolutionary biology, vegetation and conservation. The book is divided into seven chapters giving the reader an overview of natural conditions and vegetation ecology of Socotra. According to the authors, it summarises the existing state of knowledge on the vegetation in an ecological context, providing descriptive accounts of the various vegetation units and deals with the factors, predominantly abiotic, affecting the distribution and abundance of species. The first chapter explains the main objective of the publication and introduces the book content. Chapter two is devoted to topography, climate and soil characteristics. The third chapter describes the general geology and structure of Socotra, including brief geology of the ancillary islands and tectonic and climate history of the region. In the fourth chapter, the authors deal with flora and biogeography of the island, and related information about history of botanical exploration. Crucial topics such as vascular plant systematics, classification of ferns and non-vascular cryptogams, are described in this chapter. In the fifth chapter, the reader finds out a lot of interesting facts about ecology, growth forms and adaptation of plants to desert, highly saline, and high-montane ecosystems. The previous section is devoted to pollination, seed dispersal and germination. The longest chapter, chapter six, summarises information about vegetation on the island, and provides an overview of uncommonly wide ranges of vegetation classification which can be found on Socotra. There is also a detailed section describing the vegetation according to altitudinal belts and the data on potential natural vegetation. The last chapter titled "Environmental management" confronts the problems of habitat degradation and desertification, causes of ecosystem degradation including overgrazing, soil erosion, deforestation, non-native species invasion, infrastructure development and other threats. The next section is devoted to plant regeneration and conservation. Appendices of the book contain lists of the vascular plant species, bryophytes and lichens of Socotra. Throughout the book, comparisons are made between the situations occurring in Socotra and other areas of the world with a subtropical climate.

Thanks to intentions of the authors to summarise the information and results of current thematic publications and create an overwiev of existing knowledge, highly technical and also comprehensible text has been published. The publication contributed significantly to a deeping knowledge about vegetation ecology on the island of Socotra.

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