

Book Review

ANN BELL

An illustrated guide to the coprophilous Ascomycetes of Australia

CBS Biodiversity Series No. 3, Centraalbureau voor Schimmelcultures, Utrecht, The Netherlands, 2005, 172 p. – ISBN 90-70351, ISSN 1571-8859. Price 55 €. The book is available in library of the Czech Scientific Society for Mycology.

Dung fungi are very nice organisms despite their unattractive niche. In Bell's book this is documented immediately in the prologue by the impressive painting „Dungscape“ by H. Dade and colour photographs by D. P. Mahoney from the microcosm of dung fungi. Moreover, the contents of the book fully meet the expectation that its title evokes; over half of the book is filled with illustrations. The author favours the use of copious illustrations wherever possible (including picture keys).

The first chapter is devoted to Major Harry Dade, as a part of this work is based on his material (notes, descriptions, illustrations). During his retirement in Australia he studied about 1200 collections of dung.

The core of the monograph consists of three major groupings: discomycetes, plectomycetes and pyrenomycetes (the author uses these terms in a generalized way, not as formal classes). The work is equipped with a picture key to these three main groups, a picture key to the genera and dichotomous keys to the species. The author herein uses classical morphological identification features of ascomata, asci and ascospores, trichomes and paraphyses. Each genus treated is provided with a text containing the main features, literature and in some cases also a discussion. Species descriptions are not given with the exception of ten new species described in the appendix. The text part of the book provides basic information on material and methods and is completed with formulas of stains used in microscopy (appendix).

The bulk of the book is formed by illustrations of 192 species depicting ascomata, asci, paraphyses and ascospores. Most of them are line drawings, some are taken from Dade's notes. Part of the illustrations are coloured drawings. Almost all of them are of very good quality. Some are completed with diagrams showing the distribution of ascospore sizes, often compared with closely related species.

The chapter References is rich in classical and recent papers. On six pages, over 250 references are given. It is noteworthy that also numerous papers by Czech mycologists J. Moravec and M. Svrček are cited.

The book is printed on good quality paper; it is a paperback with a spiral binding. I noticed only a few typographical errors, e.g. „*Heliotales*“ (p. 11), „*Phaeotrichcaeae*“ (p. 28) and „*Dothidiales*“ (p. 51). But these do not lower the overall quality of the book.

The work was published as part of the Australian Fungal Flora. It is surprising that, according to the author, the research for this book took only three years and was based on 193 recent collections of dung (predominantly kangaroo and wombat). Part of her work is however also based on material collected by Major H. Dade. Together with Bell's experience in coprophilous fungi in New Zealand an excellent guide to dung fungi has originated, useful to all mycologists interested in ascomycetes or in teaching mycology.

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