Review of website

The lichens and lichenicolous fungi of Belgium, Luxembourg and northern France

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The internet offers unprecedented, great opportunities for the distribution of specialist information like the knowledge generated by plant taxonomy and floristics. Unlike printed matter, it allows virtually unlimited use of illustrations, correction of mistakes and regular updating of the information, and is available worldwide at low cost. In lichens support by illustrations is particularly helpful because the distinguishing characters often deviate greatly from daily life observations and are often difficult to explain by words. Therefore it is very fortunate that the best lichen experts of Belgium and Luxembourg have put together forces and created a website to make available the newest information on the distribution of lichens and lichenicolous fungi in their study area.

The site has an attractive, not too flashy look and is very carefully prepared. All information can be found easily, without much clicking through numerous or superfluous pages. It offers an updated checklist of the lichens and lichenicolous fungi of Belgium, Luxembourg and northern France, with relevant synonyms. For all accepted species red list status and relevant floristic literature are available, and often distribution maps. Close to half of all the species are illustrated by a colour photograph. These illustrations are of remarkably high quality, taking into account that these organisms are often tiny and tend to grow on very irregular surfaces, presenting great difficulties with light and focusing. The nomenclature follows modern concepts, except in a few disputed cases, like, e.g. *Amandinea*, *Protoparmeliopsis* and *Pseudosagedia*, where a conservative position is chosen. The distribution data originate from published records and unpublished field notes by the authors and selected colleagues. Much attention was paid to reliability. Data were accepted only where vouchers were seen or when they were provided by experienced persons from whose hands properly identified vouchers of the species had been at hand. Unusual records published in early floristic literature were accepted only when herbarium vouchers were found to confirm them. Published, but not accepted taxa are commented on.

The checklist and the distributional information are particularly valuable in view of the rapid progress made in recent decades in the study area. The website reflects the forefront research of recent decades in the area, showing the distribution of taxa for which the presence in surrounding areas is still largely unclear. Extremely valuable are the many good colour photographs of rarely illustrated organisms, in particular lichenicolous fungi.

The authors informed me that the website is not yet complete and that they have more data to add and more photographs to incorporate. Therefore at times a discrepancy between distribution map and literature references may exist; in about a year this should be completely corrected.

I must confess that I was unable to view the magnifications of the distribution maps in SVG-format. These are to be generated by a program that is not installed on standard computers. Supposedly it can be downloaded easily but I gave up after a few minutes. I would have preferred that these maps are visible in a more usual way, and the SVG-format presented as a special option for those who need it. Further I dislike that most pictures lack an indication of the scale. Consequently a comparison of, e.g., *Acarospora cervina* with *A. veronensis* gives the false suggestion that both are of the same size and very similar. Black lichens, like *Collema* spp., are generally shown in a greyish tinge.

Photography with underexposure might give a deeper black. The internal links, conveniently located at the top of the site (intro etc.) are not always what one might expect. The survey of the presented data lays under "credits" rather then the more usual "about" and is more usually placed before the actual data (between "intro" and "atlas"); the "links" are in fact external links of general lichenological interest but with little relevance for the main content of the website. The lichenicolous fungi are lacking from the title.

Summarising, the website is a very convenient and helpful source of information on the lichen flora of Belgium, Luxembourg and northern France, and will be of much use in lichen studies throughout Europe.

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