Book Review

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Stroh, P., Walker, K., Smith, S., Jefferson, R., Pinches, C. & Blackstock, T. 2019. Grassland plants of the British and Irish lowlands – ecology, threats and management. Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland, ISBN: 9780901158611 Hard-back

Species-rich grasslands are among the most threatened habitats types worldwide and have suffered dramatic magnitude of the decline in area (some grassland types extents decreased more than 90% in the last century – Dengler et al. 2014 and citations therein; Habel et al. 2013). In the Palaearctic, the most crucial driver of grassland biodiversity is the change of management intensity (Dengler et al. 2020).

Decline of grassland biodiversity by management change is caused either by the decrease in management intensity – cessation of former extensive management and abandonment, or by the increased use – intensive management and overuse (increased rate of fertilisation, seeding by cultivars, increased frequency of cut or overgrazing, Dengler et al. 2014).

Stroh et al. (2019) book focuses on threatened grassland plants (categorised from critically endangered to near threatened based on IUCN criteria) of British and Irish lowlands (grasslands situated at an elevation below 300m a.s.l.). The backbone and most voluminous part of the book introduces all 109 threatened plant species by focusing on their identification, habitat requirements, biogeography and ecological characteristics. It is very important that the authors tried to collect – based on published evidences – the management and conservation requirements of each species. Following a short intro, the authors introduce the most important grassland habitats in lowlands following the NVC classification. After the classification section, the authors introduce the most important drivers of lowland grassland biodiversity.

I found of great interest the section where the authors tried to compare the plant characteristics / trait spectra of threatened lowland grassland plants with that of other non-threatened ones based on the expert list containing 458 lowland grassland species. With these analyses the authors have tried to answer why some lowland grassland plants are more threatened than others.

The book is well organised, nicely illustrated and is supplemented by several appendices listing for example to each of the 109 threatened species in which grassland habitat types they occur. It is of high-quality print with a nice, artistic designed cover. To sum up, I think it is a useful guide of lowland grassland plants for all readers – including naturalists and researchers and site managers working in conservation and restoration.

References

Dengler, J., Janišová, M., Török, P. & Wellstein, C. 2014. Biodiversity of Palaearctic grasslands: a synthesis. *Agriculture, Ecosystems & Environment* 182: 1–14.

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Habel, J.C., Török, P., Dengler, J., Janišová, M., Wiezik ,M., Stork, N. & Wellstein, C. 2013. European grasslands: A threatened ecosystem biodiversity hotspot. *Biodiversity & Conservation* 22: 2131–2138.

***Péter Török*,** Debrecen, Hungary

molinia@gmail.com