

## Book Review

DOI: 10.21570/EDGG.PG.53.34-34

**Huhta, A-P. 2021 Opas perinnemaisemiin — Niitut, kedot, ahot ja metsälaitumet** (Engl. Guide to traditional landscapes – Meadows, dry meadows and woodland pastures. Vastapaino Oy (Tampere, Finland). 477 pages, 300 colour photos, 30 sites ISBN 978-951-768-775-1. Price €33.90 paperback. <https://vastapaino.fi/opas-perinnemaisemiin/>

Contrary to most of my previous book reviews, the purpose of this review is not to present a book that you will all wish to buy and read. Unfortunately this book will not be accessible to many of you for the simple reason that it is written in Finnish, and I am not aware of any plans to publish translated versions. However, the author is one of the foremost authorities on semi-natural grassland habitats in Finland, with an intimate knowledge and extensive experience of these habitats and their history. As a result, it is packed with fascinating information and a really enjoyable read for Finnish readers interested in these habitats.

The classification of grassland habitats in Finland is rather unique and contrasts with the approaches to grassland classification that have been adopted in other regions. So I would like to take this opportunity to summarise the contents of this guide to Finnish semi-natural grasslands for you. I guess that for most people, an electronic version of the book would have been more practicable, as that would permit the use of digital translation applications, though some of the associated terminology is challenging to translate. Unfortunately, however, it is not available in electronic form.

Finland is a rather long country, with its southernmost parts in the hemiboreal region and northernmost parts above the Arctic Circle and extending even beyond the tree limit. In these northernmost parts, the summer is short and intensive, characterized by non-stop sunshine during the summer. Classification of grassland habitats in Finland distinguishes cultural grasslands, which have arisen through traditional agricultural practices, and natural meadows, such as flood meadows and meadows with an insufficient soil layer to support the development of woodland. This book covers 12 main categories of semi-natural grasslands, some of them with further sub-divisions, and two categories of anthropogenic grasslands. These include moorland pastures (*nummi*), dry meadows on bedrock (*kallioketo*), dry meadows (*keto*), fresh meadows (*tuore nitty*), wet meadows (*kostea nitty*), lake and riverine flood meadows (*järven- ja joen rantaniitty*), coastal flood meadows (*merenrantaniitty*), flood meadows (*tulvaniitty*), bog meadows (*suoniitty*), meadows with trees managed for fodder production (*lehdesniitty*), wooded pastures (*hakamaat*) and forest pastures (*metsälaitumet*). The anthropogenic categories are novel environments (roadside and railway verges; powerline corridors, municipal parks, artificial meadows, ski slopes and aerodromes) and historical castle grounds and fortifications. In the first section of the book, Huhta provides an introduc-



tion to cultural grassland habitats in Finland, a history of their development and subsequent decline. The first part ends with a review of threatened species of semi-natural grasslands in Finland, covering the taxa vascular plants, mosses, lichens, fungi, birds, insects and amphibians and reptiles. Part two goes through each of the 12 main types of semi-natural grasslands, for each of which there is a general description, with a list of indicator species, and then descriptions of 1-6 examples for each one. There is also a map inside the front cover of the book, on which the locations of all the sites covered are shown.

The book is sumptuously illustrated with beautiful colour photographs of example habitats and their vegetation. It comprises a comprehensive guide to the semi-natural grasslands of Finland, which is an invaluable resource for anyone working with these habitats and their conservation. In particular, it is a great help to anyone surveying these habitats. It is also enjoyable to read because it is written in an entertaining style, with references to poetry and local culture. The sections are also colour-coded, which helps its use as a reference work.

For me this book is a wonderful resource, packed with valuable information and an enjoyable read. I am a little disappointed that it is aimed solely at the domestic market, though many of the people in Finland who work with the conservation of semi-natural grasslands, work in Finnish and this is a wonderful resource for them. However, it would have been great if there could have been at least brief summaries in English in each of the grassland descriptions, as a result of which the book would also have been appealing to grassland scientists elsewhere.

**Stephen Venn**, Poland  
[stephen.venn@helsinki.fi](mailto:stephen.venn@helsinki.fi)