

Book Review

McPherson, S. and Amoroso, V.B. 2011. FIELD GUIDE TO THE PITCHER PLANTS OF THE PHILIPPINES. Redfern Natural History Productions, Poole, Dorset, England. 62 pages. ISBN 978-0-9558918-5. Paperback, £14.99 (signed), £12.99 (unsigned). www.redfernnaturalhistory.com

Two of the most bizarre and biologically intriguing angiosperm plant genera have received much attention within the last decade: the parasitic and malodorous *Rafflesia* R. Brown and the carnivorous *Nepenthes* Linnaeus. Both genera are well represented in the Philippines where they had kept botanists busy with new species discoveries every so often.

Species of *Nepenthes* commonly known as pitcher plants or less so as monkey cups have become botanical curiosities in Europe starting from the 17th century when various collectors brought back specimens (and tall tales) mainly from their Southeast Asian center of distribution. Today about 140 species, natural and cultivated hybrids have been recorded. In the Philippines alone, 27 species are recognized, described and illustrated in the colorful guide book under review. What is interesting from the phytogeographic point of view is the fact that all Philippine species are endemic to the country except for one that is widely distributed from southern China, across insular Southeast Asia and into northern Australia. Equally intriguing is that many of the highland Philippine species exhibit strict or narrow endemism in isolated mountain habitats, making them good candidates for testing the theory of island biogeography.

The volume under review forms part of a series of colorful guides published mainly by Stewart McPherson, a British naturalist, nature photographer par excellence and entrepreneur who is credited with naming more than 35 new species of carnivorous plants and writing at least nine books about these bizarre plants. The Filipino botanist, Victor B. Amoroso of Central Mindanao University is the co-author of this particular volume who himself has more than 30 years of experience as a field botanist, pteridologist and lately as a pitcher plant specialist. Together they produced this wonderful guide that aims to showcase the amazing diversity of these beautiful plants and to draw attention to their threatened status particularly those highland species with dwindling numbers.

The volume starts with a brief introduction, species listing and map. Each species, arranged in alphabetical sequence is provided with a bibliographic citation labeled "Description" presumably referring to the protologue. The first

paragraph opens with information about the source of the species name, distribution, and some ecological notes. The second and third paragraphs consist of the descriptions of the plant including useful measurements. Each species included in the treatment is provided with three superb photographs, many of which are published for the first time, attesting to the authors' painstaking efforts to locate plants in the field, taking spectacular photographs *in situ* and putting them all in one convenient field guide. This in itself is the single most important contribution of the work under review to the growing body of Philippine botanical literature. The field guide concludes with a short treatment on *Nepenthes* hybrids and conservation which should raise many red flags for all scientists and environmental policy makers.

While this volume is not intended to be an exhaustive review of Philippine *Nepenthes*, there are a few items that would interest taxonomists. For instance, the volume would have given its users more reason to peruse this book in the field by providing a simple dichotomous key to the species illustrated in this guide. Furthermore, within this field guide format, the authors understandably did not discuss about some nomenclatural issues like synonymies. For example, *N. globamphora* S. Kurata & Toshiyama, originally described from Surigao, is usually regarded as a synonym of *N. bellii* K. Kondo, also from Surigao. Another species, *N. graciliflora* A.D.E. Elmer originally described from Sibuyan, seems taxonomically unresolved despite its type specimen being well preserved but presumably unstudied.

The authors of this field guide provided a bibliographic citation labeled "Description" under each species name that lists all the authors of that particular publication together with year, journal or book name and exact pagination. However, readers are cautioned that the authors listed therein may not be the same exact set of authors associated with the honor of naming the new species! A case in point is *N. attenboroughii* and a few others. That sensational species from Palawan publicized by the international media as a plant that eats rats, was first described in a paper that was published in an issue of the Botanical Journal of the Linnean Society. That paper was co-authored by six persons, but the species name was in fact published and attributed only to three of them. The same system was followed in naming other Philippine species such as *N. gantungensis*, *N. leonardoii*, *N. palawanensis* and *N. sibuyanensis*. There is nothing wrong with this growing practice as taxonomists start to become more meticulous in recognizing efforts for manuscript writing separate from species naming. In fact, the number of authors of new plant taxa should be kept to a minimum as recommended by the International Code of Nomenclature for Algae, Fungi and Plants.

A special note on the nomenclature of *N. mirabilis* is in order arising partly from the information provided by the book under review. Although McPherson and Amoroso referred to the description of Druce (1916) as the presumptive

protologue following some authors, the species authorship was listed as *N. mirabilis* (Loureiro) Rafarin in the Carnivorous Plants Database (http://www.omnisterra.com/bot/cp_home.cgi). The plant was first described by Loureiro (1790) as *Phyllamphora mirabilis* and was presumably transferred to *Nepenthes* by Rafarin (1869). However, the International Plant Names Index (IPNI, <http://www.ipni.org/index.html>) and the IUCN Carnivorous Plant Checklist (http://www.kew.org/conservation/CITES_Checklists/CITES_CarnivorousPlantChecklist.pdf) listed the species authority as *N. mirabilis* (Loureiro) Druce. This taxonomic issue should be looked into more closely and resolved expeditiously by specialists.

This handsome volume is a nice field companion to be appreciated by serious pitcher plant enthusiasts and other naturalists. The paperback may not withstand rough handling for more than a few field sojourns. Nevertheless, it is a delightful book to own although it does involve a considerable financial investment for the average Filipino.

LITERATURE CITED

- Druce, G. 1916. *Nepenthes mirabilis*. Botanical Exchange Club of the British Isles 4: 637.
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