

Journal review

Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics

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This new journal, edited by Peter Edwards and a board of editors in Zürich and Bern, is the reincarnation of the house journal of the Geobotanical Institute (ETH) in Zürich which published more than 120 monographic volumes between its inception in 1922 and its present transformation. The editors wish the new journal to be an international forum for 'mature, critical opinion' and for substantial monographic studies that 'have a review quality about them'. Most mainstream journals now have a forum or letters section and many publish short reviews, but there is a real need for the kind of vehicle this new journal aims to be.

Volume 1 contains 14 articles, three on systematics and the remainder ecological. Four of the latter deal with plant-animal interactions and one with the interaction between plant competition and disease. Most of the articles include an evolutionary angle on their subject. Each part of Volume 1 opens with a hook (or a barb!). In Part one this is an article by Peter Grubb in which he shows us, in highly characteristic manner, that one of Philip Grime's three primary strategies, the stress-tolerator, should in reality be three distinct strategies: plants with stress-tolerant traits as both seedlings and adults, those expressing these traits only in the seedling phase, and those without stress-tolerant traits at any stage yet which are flexible enough to tolerate conditions in which resources are in short supply. This last category of stress-tolerator responds rapidly when a shortage is relieved.

Part two of Volume 1 opens with a paper by Nick Waser and Mary Price entitled 'What plant ecologists can learn from zoology'. The authors admit that zoologists may also learn from botany, but (alas) none will read this journal. Waser & Price's article is more convincing as an argument for wider (and deeper) reading in general than as an

argument for reading about particular projects in zoology. They are quite wrong to claim that plant ecologists in the 1950s 'remained largely silent on the subject of long-term population dynamics', although much of the writing on the subject was indeed in Russian (White, 1985). It is also incorrect to say that 'there is no reason to believe that plant populations lack complex dynamics' because, on the contrary, there is every reason (Watkinson, 1980). It is not coincidental that the only well documented case of complex dynamics in a plant population comes from a long-term study conducted in Eastern Europe (Symonides *et al.*, 1986). One of the facts we are supposed to learn from zoology is that granivores disperse seeds and therefore 'may be friends-in-disguise of plants'. Will this surprise many plant ecologists?

I would love this journal to put a stop to penis-envy among botanists and to induce pistil-envy among zoologists. Plant molecular phylogenetics is making stunning progress, far faster than any seen in bird or insect phylogeny for example, and this is opening up enormous research possibilities at the interfaces between plant ecology, systematics and evolution. This is the territory covered for all taxa by *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics*, but the botanical focus of *Perspectives* places it in pole position to publish reviews of some of the most exciting work in the whole field. Though there are only hints of these possibilities in the papers in this volume it is an area that I would expect the editors to make a feature of in future. I shall watch with interest.

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