

Thus, from any point of view, the wild orchids should be protected in appropriate ways. However, in recent years, due to the rapid increase in the prices of orchids in domestic and international markets the wild orchid plants have been collected by people illegally. In addition, frequent and large scale logging and excessive land reclamation resulted in the habitats of wild orchid plants being destroyed or fragmented, and the number of valuable germplasm resources of wild orchids, especially the rare species, became endangered in some areas. Thus, the protection and rescue of the endangered resource of wild orchids in situ or ex situ is becoming more and more an imperative. The development of techniques for rapid propagation and cultivation of various orchid plants are also vital. In order to do this work more effectively, all-around recognition of past and current ecology and distribution of wild orchid plants is needed.

The book *Chinese Wild Orchids* is one of the largest and most comprehensive monographs illustrating the wild orchid resources in the world. The book was written in both Chinese and English, and includes 117 genera, 403 species and 2 varieties of Chinese wild orchids. The morphological characteristics, origin, habitat and

elevation of distribution, inflorescence time of each species was described in detail. Abundant first-hand information was included in the book. Most color photographs in the book were taken by the authors in the field, and many of them are being published for the first time. The book has strong scientific and practical values. Its publication will promote the research on orchids, exploitation and protection of the orchid resources, development of orchid industry, as well as the international academic exchanges in the field of orchids.

The book was written on the basis of textual research weighing almost every word. Abundant illustrations are helpful for readers to easily understand the explanations. The book is suitable for professionals who engage in botany, taxonomy, agriculture, forestry, horticulture, medicinal plants and other related fields.

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**Book Review Editor's note:** The American Orchid Society has recently published a series of beautifully-illustrated articles on Chinese orchids in its journal *Orchids*.

### The Vascular Plants and Their Eco-Geographical Distribution in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau Area

By Wu Yuhu. Science Press, Beijing, 2008, 1370pp, Price: 280.00 CNY.

The Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, with an average elevation of 4000 metres and covering an area of 2 300 000 square kilometres of land, is known as the "roof of the world" and the "Third Pole of the Earth". The formation and development of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau since the Cenozoic is one of the most important events in the natural history of the Earth, because its uplift has a profound impact on the natural environment of vast adjacent areas. As a unique natural geographical unit and large ecosystem of the world, Qinghai-Tibet Plateau has become an ideal natural laboratory for carrying out research in the fields of geography, biology, ecology, resource and environmental science, and other related subjects.

The vast area and complexity of the environment of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau provide diversified conditions for the growth and development of a large number of plant species. The complexity of the flora of the area lies in the abundant plant species, geographical elements and vegetation types. According to a rough estimation, there are about 10 000 higher seed plant species in the area. The area not only retains a number of ancient plant species, but also involves a lot of new plant species after the geological uplift. So far, the number of genera and species of the ferns, gymnosperms, and angiosperms being found in the Qinghai-

Tibet Plateau area accounts for 40% of the flora of China. Furthermore, nowadays the new records of plant species are frequently found in this area.

Since the 1850s, a number of foreign explorers and scientists successively carried out a variety of investigations in fields such as geology, geography, flora, fauna, as well as natural conditions and social customs, in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau area, accumulating some preliminary information. From the 1950s, large-scale comprehensive scientific investigations organized by the central and local governments were carried out several times in the area, which laid a solid basis for studying the formation, evolution and natural resources of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau area. Especially active were many botanists as backbone members participating in these investigations. They collected a large number of plant specimens, which became valuable data for the analysis of the flora of the area.

Based on the plant specimens collected in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau area by former researchers, and the author's own first-hand data on the flora of the area accumulated in more than 30 years of investigations, as well as a large number of literature references in China and abroad related to the area, the book comprehensively addresses the vascular plants and their eco-geographical distribution in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau area.

The book provides the Chinese and Latin names of each vascular plant family, genus and species currently found in the whole Qinghai-Tibet Plateau area, except for the area of Hengduan Mountains. For each vascular plant genus and species, the important morphological characteristics, the related primary literatures, distribution area, range of altitude and environmental characteristics are given in detail.

The book was scrupulously written and there are few errors. Abundant illustrations aid readers' understanding of the text. The book is suitable for professionals

who engage in botany, agriculture, forestry, geography and environmental resources and other related fields, as well as professional teachers and students, staff in production, application, and so on.

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## ENVIRONMENT

### A Primer of Conservation Biology

By Richard B. Primack. 2008. Fourth edition. Sinauer Associates Inc., Sunderland, Massachusetts, USA. 349 pages. ISBN: 978-0-87893-692-2. Paperback.

This textbook is a useful and up-to-date introduction to the rapidly growing field of conservation biology, written mainly for undergraduate university students. In fact, I have used the previous edition of this book in my own conservation biology course, at York University's Glendon College, for the last four years. Due to its reasonably concise and generally well-researched coverage of many current topics in this field of study, *A Primer of Conservation Biology* is particularly useful for a half-year, or a one-term, introductory course.

Richard Primack, a professor at Boston University and the current editor-in-chief of the reputable scientific journal *Biological Conservation*, has also authored a more detailed, longer textbook titled *Essentials of Conservation Biology*, and this more complex book is suitable for a full-year, more advanced course. In fact, the author has produced new editions of both of these textbooks every few years, since 1993. This poses a bit of a challenge to professors who have been using a particular edition of one of the textbooks for a longer period of time, since, just as one becomes comfortable with a current version of the book, a new, generally longer and reorganized, edition comes along. However, the new editions can be justified by the rapid accumulation of new facts and studies in this dynamic field of biology, and the author has done his best to include numerous very recent and important references in the latest (fourth) edition of the *A Primer of Conservation Biology* textbook. In comparison to the previous edition, the current version of the book contains almost twice as many chapters (there are nine chapters now, as opposed to five chapters in the third edition), but these chapters are generally shorter than the ones found in the third edition. As a result, the new textbook is only a little bit (29 pages) longer than the previous version – a modest and manageable increase in size, from the point of view of a professor planning a short course based on the book. Furthermore, unlike the previous editions, which had only black-and-white diagrams and

figures, the current book has all the illustrations in full colour, and this certainly makes the textbook more appealing to look at and browse through.

The book also has a good index and a useful glossary, including many key terms in ecology and conservation biology. The reference section is detailed and up-to-date, and virtually each reference listed here is followed by the book chapter or chapters where the study was initially cited – a nice and useful touch. A list of selected environmental organizations and sources of information about conservation issues is provided in an appendix.

As always, with such fairly general textbooks, experts can take issue with aspects of the particular coverage of certain controversial topics of current interest. For example, the discussion of introduced species offered on page 111 simply repeats some of the standard points often made by certain invasion biologists. The Purple Loosestrife is cited as an example of an exotic European species which is currently taking over marshes in North America. However, there is no mention of a major study by Hager and McCoy (1998), where the authors reviewed all the available information and found no solid evidence in support of the notion that this much-maligned exotic plant has a negative effect on our wetlands. In fact, it seems that many insect species, including native ones, feed on this plant species (Diehl et al. 1997; Guiasu 2008). Such information would add a bit of much-needed balance to this discussion. Primack also mentions that introduced worm species “are currently altering soil conditions across North America, with potentially enormous, but largely unknown, consequences to the rich native underground biological communities”. Well, since this is a scientific textbook, perhaps we should wait for conclusive scientific evidence before making such sweeping and largely unsubstantiated statements. If the impact of certain introduced species is not currently known, and we do not have any clear evidence that they are causing any harm to the environment, then we should not make assumptions about their potential “enormous” negative impacts. This only

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In response to the review of *Contributions to the History of Herpetology*. CFN 126(3): 344-345, the book's editor Kraig Adler pointed out (personal communication to FRC 12 May 2013): "Only one small correction. Mrs. Martof used a kitchen knife, not a gun. She told the police she slipped while cutting some pizza. But Bernie was stabbed up under his rib cage several times!"

***Erratum The Canadian Field-Naturalist***

It has come to our attention that sections of many of the book reviews by Li Dezhi and Qin Aili were copied from sources without attribution. The journal and the authors apologize for this oversight.