



Book review

Taxonomy of Economic Seaweeds: With Reference to Some Pacific Species, Volume 8, edited by Isabella A. Abbott and Karla McDermid (co-ed.) 2002. California Sea Grant College Program. US\$15, ISBN 1-888691-07-7.

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Most of us, after over four decades of scientific publishing, would be winding down. Not so the indefatigable Izzie Abbott. In 1984 she organized the first workshop in this series, then expertly edited the proceedings and has not stopped since. The sites of the workshops have ranged widely in or between the Pacific and Indian Oceans and consisted on each occasion of an elite band of algal taxonomists sharing their recent research and being given the opportunity to collect seaweeds new to them. The careful choice of participants and the rigorous editing have resulted in a highly quotable series of publications. I am no taxonomist, but have often found answers to queries in these volumes. Perhaps it says something for the perseverance of algal taxonomists that half of the participants at this workshop held in 1999 were present at the first, 15 years before. This time they came from Thailand, Vietnam, China, Indonesia, Japan, Hawaii and Chile.

The current volume held its traumas for the editors after the final versions of all the papers disappeared in the mail on the way to the editorial office. This caused an understandable delay in publication, but why, after all the material had been reassembled, there was a further 22 months before publication is not clear.

The volume is divided into 6 sections, each introduced by Dr Abbott. The first, on *Sargassum*, occupies nearly half the volume and more than half the papers

are authored or co-authored by the legendary C.K. Tseng, now in his mid-90s. The complexity of the genus is illustrated by the fact that 7 new species are described in the section and Dr Tseng has counted 130 species records for China. The shorter sections are on Gelidiales, *Gracilaria*, *Kappaphycus*, *Halymenia* and an annotated species list for the vicinity of Nha Trang, Vietnam, where the workshop was held.

A useful feature in the series has been the inclusion of keys to species, for parts or the whole of a genus and for a restricted geographical area or worldwide. The current volume is no exception, 5 keys are included, where appropriate.

Many people might be surprised that, of the 22 papers in this volume, only one is based on molecular work. Perhaps we should see this as somewhat redressing the balance: so few taxonomic papers in the current phycological literature deal primarily with morphology and anatomy. And the volume is blessed with a wealth of illustrations, including some very good anatomical drawings (a rarity nowadays), particularly by Xia Bangmei. It is a pity, however, that the reduction was fractionally too great for the thinness of a few of her lines.

At US\$15 this book would be a good buy, even if it were not full of useful and reliable fundamental taxonomical information.

The next workshop has already been held, in Hawaii again. Perhaps sometime the Southern Hemisphere might be honoured. Let us hope that Dr Abbott enjoys the same longevity as Dr Tseng!

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