

## BOTANY

**À la découverte du Nord: deux siècles et demi d'exploration de la flore nordique du Québec et du Labrador**

By Jacques Cayouette. 2014. Éditions MultiMondes, 930 rue Pouliot, Québec, Québec, Canada, G1V 3N9. 363 pages, 49.95 CAD, Cloth.

It takes only a few minutes of perusing this publication to recognize its value in documenting the botanical exploration of Québec and Labrador north of 54° latitude. For one who has examined numerous herbarium specimens from the region, this publication brings new insights into the lives and work of many historical figures, as well as the many more recent contributors in-

cluding those of former colleagues. The author has meticulously compiled, mainly in chronological order, a compendium of contributions for more than 420 explorers, researchers and others who have, in one form or another, enriched the botanical and natural history knowledge of the region in question. The publication is replete with about 400 illustrations, primarily in colour.

These include images of the individuals themselves, maps and routes taken, portions of field journals and publication listings, title covers of older publications, as well as photos of collection sites. The latter provide a vivid visual record of collection sites and habitats for specimens whose localities are known to most of us engaged in systematic studies only from names on herbarium specimen labels.

The book is organized into seven sections and 27 chapters. The care taken in presenting the information is evident beginning with the table of contents. This provides a very useful overview of the contents within each chapter for each of the sections by listing the primary topics covered and individuals treated. The seven sections are as follows: 1) natural sciences of Hudson Bay during the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries; 2) Moravian missionaries as pioneers of the flora of Labrador; 3) early contributions by Canadians; 4) major contributions of Americans and Europeans; 5) major Québec figures; 6) the many northern projects by governments and eastern Canadian Universities; 7) developments in the North confront the protection of the flora. An introductory text for each of these sections provides a brief overview and background for the information to be presented in the chapters to follow.

The chapters provide detailed biographical information on individuals, their projects, and collections. In addition, what makes this book unique is that it is a treasure trove of photos of explorers, botanists, and naturalists providing a visual “who’s who” highlighting individuals, past and recent, who have contributed to the botanical knowledge of northern Quebec and Labrador. Individuals mentioned include: Joseph Banks, Robert Bell, John Macoun, Arthème Dutilly and Ernest Lepage, Nicholas Polunin, Jacques Rousseau, and Alf

Erling Porsild. The many contributions by individuals of Québec universities, including those from Laval, McGill, Sherbrooke, and Montreal, are detailed as well as projects and individuals of government departments.

The colour landscape panoramas and habitat photos from sites where collections originated contribute much to the showy “coffee table” appearance of the book. Interspersed, also, are colour images of species in their natural setting or of herbarium specimens which were the basis for the description of a new taxon from a specific locality. An update on the current taxonomic status of these are also provided. Of much historical interest, also, are the archival black and white images of Moravian missionaries, images of early forts and settlements, and group photos of explorers and researchers in the field.

The book concludes with a summary and explanation of the main information sources used in preparing the contents, and provides a substantial bibliographic list of about 1000 references.

The book is a must-have reference work for serious students in systematics, for naturalists interested in the historical events leading to the botanical exploration of the region, and for institutions documenting Canada’s flora. It provides the historical context behind the collectors, their travels, and varied research projects, and the resulting collections that document the flora and are housed in our national and regional herbaria. It also fosters a better appreciation of the degree of effort that has been expended by so many individuals over the past two and a half centuries in amassing the current knowledge on the vegetation and flora of this sizeable northern region of Canada.

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