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BOOK REVIEW

Pitcher Plants of the Old World, Volumes One and Two by Stewart McPherson. 2009. xiii + 631 pp. (vol. 1); 768 pp. (vol. 2). illus. 700+ color photos. ISBN 978-0-95558918-2-3 (vol. 1); 978-0-9558918-3-0 (vol. 2) £34.99 ($79.99) per volume plus shipping (hardcover). Redfern Natural History Productions, Poole, Dorset, England. [order direct from www.redfernnaturalhistory.com]

Pitcher Plants of the Old World is the latest offering from Stewart McPherson, who in only a few short years has established himself as one of the leading popularizers and premier photographers of carnivorous plants. This two-volume set joins his other books on the North and South American species [*Pitcher Plants of the Americas* (2006)], the ''sticky-leaved'' carnivorous plants [*Glistening Carnivores* (2008), reviewed in *Rhodora* 110: 492–494 (2008)], the tepuis that are home to many endemic carnivorous plants [*Lost Worlds of the Guiana Highlands* (2008)], and an overview of the carnivorous plant genera [*Carnivorous Plants of the World* (forthcoming)]. *Pitcher Plants of the Old World* is based on the author's dedicated travel seeking out carnivorous plants throughout the world. The volumes cover the unrelated genera *Nepenthes* and *Cephalotus*. The unifying theme is that these genera occur on many ''Old World'' islands and continents—from New Caledonia to Madagascar, and from Australia to India and Sri Lanka.

As an introduction to *Nepenthes* and *Cephalotus* aimed at a broad and botanically curious audience, these volumes are a qualified success. McPherson provides a solid overview of the biology, ecology, diversity, distribution, and conservation status of *Cephalotus follicularis* Labill. (a narrow endemic known only from a few locations in southwest Australia) and the 120 known and a few unnamed species of *Nepenthes*. McPherson begins by giving a brief synopsis of carnivorous plants of the world and by reviewing some well-trodden introductory ground describing how Charles and Francis Darwin and Joseph Hooker, among others, demonstrated that some plants can capture and derive nutrients from animals. A comparatively short chapter covers current thinking on *Nepenthes* systematics; two much longer ones discuss the intricacies of how pitcher plants capture prey, and the assemblages of insects

and other arthropods that live within the pitchers and interact with the plant.

The bulk of the two volumes (over 1000 pages) consists of individual descriptions of each *Nepenthes* species. Gorgeous photographs are accompanied by paragraphs on: nomenclature and etymology; habitat and geographic range; structure of the plant's photosynthetic lamina (an expanded leaf base and petiole); prey-capturing pitchers (epiascidiate leaves) and the elaborate peristomes that rim the pitchers; inflorescences and flowers; related species; and threats and conservation status. Although the information provided is generally accurate, the repetitive cadence to the text may encourage readers to skip the prose and simply enjoy the pictures.

After a scant 35 pages dedicated to *Cephalotus*, Volume Two concludes with a welcome discussion of the major conservation issues—habitat loss, poaching, and the impact of non-native and feral animals that can destroy small populations—and a guide to reputable distributors of pitcher plants and other carnivorous plants. All these growers propagate their plants using tissue culture or cultivated seeds and like McPherson himself, all participate importantly in global efforts to conserve carnivorous plants.

Although the production is lavish—heavyweight glossy paper, full-color and true-to-life photographs—the text could have been much better proofed. For example, despite the assertion that "[a]ll *Nepenthes* inflorescences take the form of a panicle … these inflorescences are not in fact racemes, but racemic panicles, though they are often referred to as racemes for the sake of simplicity or as a result of misinterpretation" (p. 198), all but two (of >120 species) of the descriptions of each species' inflorescence begins with "[the] inflorescence is a raceme …" Authors' names are misspelled in citations (e.g., Macbridge for Macbride on p. 14) and many in-text citations are not in the bibliography (including Macbridge [*sic*]/ Macbride 1815). The termites that *Nepenthes albomarginata* preferentially feed on are referred to as "Nasotermites" (p. 91), when in fact they are *Hospitalitermes bicolor* (Haviland), and the symbiotic ant *Camponotus schmitzi* Stärcke is misspelled *C. schmitz* (on p. 122). Finally, as if to emphasize the culinary uses of *Nepenthes*, Wallace's lengthy description of drinking water from pitchers is repeated twice (pp. 156–157 and p. 206).

Perhaps most curious of all, given that this is a book aimed at a general audience and did not overtly go through peer-review, the

Appendix includes a formal description (complete with designation of a holotype and Latin text) of a new species from Mindanao (*Nepenthes micramphora* Heinrich et al.), as well as a nomenclatural revision of *Henriksenia labuanica* Striffler & Rembold *nom. nov.*, the crab spider formerly known as *Misumenops nepenthicola* Bristowe that lives within the pitchers of *Nepenthes mirabilis* (Lour.) Druce. These really should have been published elsewhere, and the Appendix restricted to the conversion tables for measures of length, volume, and temperature, and the breathless description of McPherson's discovery of the recently described *Nepenthes attenboroughii* Robinson et al. [appropriately published in the *Botanical Journal of the Linnean Society* 159: 195–202 (2009)].

Quibbles aside, anyone who enjoys carnivorous plants will be able to spend many hours captured by *Pitcher Plants of the Old World*. It is a substantial synthesis of the current natural history knowledge about *Nepenthes* and *Cephalotus*. Although at nearly 5 kg the two volumes are much too heavy to carry into the field, the photographs alone are worth the comparatively modest price (only 12¢ per page or 3¢ per gram). The site descriptions and photographs also will whet one's appetite for traveling into the remote islands, highlands, and forests of the Old World to see these incredible pitcher plants first-hand.

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