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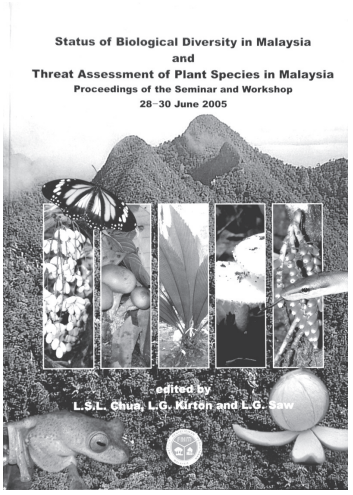
BOOK REVIEW



Status of Biological Diversity in Malaysia and Threat Assessment of Plant Species in Malaysia. Proceedings of the Seminar and Workshop 28–30 June 2005. Edited by L. S. L. Chua, L. G. Kirton & L. G. Saw, 2007. Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM), 290 pages. ISBN: 978-983-2181-88-0.

This is a handsomely bound 25.5 cm × 18.5 cm hardcover volume, with a richly illustrated cover. It documents the outcome of the workshop-cum-seminar session that took place in 2005. The contents page lists 19 papers but only 15 are full length articles while the other four are abstracts.

This proceedings volume covers a wide scope of topics, all in relation to the biodiversity of Malaysia, encompassing both West and East Malaysia. It starts off with a short Foreword by the Director of FRIM. An Introduction to this volume is lacking, missing out on an opportunity to inform the reader of the purpose and background of this seminar-cum-workshop.

This volume is divided into four sections dealing with vertebrates, invertebrates, fungi and plants. Each section starts off with a colour plate depicting a habitat shot with several insets, each plate is followed by a mini-legend with captions of each individual organism and photo credits. The 15 papers enclosed show differing levels of expertise and in-depth study of the separate organism groups or topics.

Vertebrates. The mammalian paper is noteworthy as it is a review done up by regional experts and is appended with a checklist. It is a pity that the avifauna of Malaysia was only represented by an abstract. The herpetofauna paper is again helmed by regional experts and lists an impressive bibliography and three appendices, listing amphibians, reptiles and relevant websites. The papers on freshwater fishes could have had been more comprehensive and lacked a checklist. The commercial and exotic fish diversity in marine parks paper was represented by an abstract.

Invertebrates. The freshwater crab paper was helmed again by regional experts and provided a very comprehensive checklist. Next a short paper describing the current research interests in insects. This is followed by three overview papers on Lepidopterans, Coleopterans and Hymenopterans.

Fungi. This is represented by two papers, the first being a brief overview of macrofungal diversity and the second an abstract on mangrove fungi.

Plants. This section starts off not with a plant, but with seaweeds (which are essentially algae); which includes a comprehensive checklist. The Flora of Malaysia is the next paper dealing with botanical histories, challenges and future scope of such an endeavour. The next paper deals briefly with a current favourite on forest resource and sustainable management. Plant biogeography was represented by an abstract. The last three papers deal with application-based topics, viz. the use of geographical information systems (GIS) for conservation assessments, the use of IUCN red list categories and strategies to conserve a species of Dipterocarp tree.

All in all, this volume is a highly recommended read for any person interested in knowing more about Malaysian or Southeast Asian biodiversity.

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