



DRIZZLE, MIDGES (MISERY!) AND MOSS. WELCOME TO THE RAINFORESTS OF BRITAIN AND IRELAND!

Ben Averis, 2020, 86 pp. Privately published.

This is a wonderfully individualistic account of the cryptogamic, particularly the bryophyte, flora of the so-called rainforests of western Britain and Ireland written by someone who has probably visited and surveyed more such rainforests than anyone else alive. It is a very pleasant mix of text, maps, drawings, and photographs (all by Ben except for a few lichen portraits by Sandy Coppins). The text is written in a very readable, conversational style, the photographs of the habitats and individual species are excellent, and the drawings are wonderfully atmospheric. The booklet also introduces, to me at least, the Selkirk Bannock fruit-bread and his wife Alison's special (?endemic) variety of this fruit-bread. Ben articulates his ideas on answering the familiar question asked of bryologists "why look at these mosses and bryophytes and other 'boring' things?". He reveals that he is interested not only in temperate rainforests, but also in busy cities with skyscrapers because they are all physical environments. Mark Hill once said to me whilst he was surveying the flora of conifer plantations in Galloway that "everything is interesting if you study it in enough detail", even forestry tracks through Sitka spruce plantations! Ben illustrates Mark's view brilliantly in his booklet.

The booklet contains many superb photographs of common and rare bryophytes, lichens, and ferns in temperate rainforests, including rarities such as *Radula*

holtii, *Plagiochila heterophylla*, *Hageniella micans*, *Sematophyllum demissum*, *Daltonia splachnoides*, *Campylopus subporodictyon*, *Sticta canarensis*, *Platismatia norvegica* and *Trichomanes speciosum*, some of which have not had their photographs published before. There are some unusual pictures of epiphyllous *Colura* and *Microlejeunea* on a *Blechnum spicant* frond and of *Metzgeria violacea* and *Colura* on a bramble leaf, both in Argyll rainforests.

Ben concludes with some critical comments about English names for bryophytes such as 'Deceptive Pearlwort' for *Adelanthus decipiens* or 'Pouncewort' for *Harpalejeunea*, *Drepanolejeunea*, and *Aphanolejeunea*. Despite figuring in the title, midges and misery are only discussed in one short paragraph on the penultimate page.

I greatly enjoyed Ben's booklet. It brought back memories of botanising in such rainforests in the 1960s and 1970s with Hilary Birks and the late Derek Ratcliffe, who would have been delighted that his favourite rainforest liverwort, *Adelanthus decipiens*, has a full page to itself along with a superb photograph. I hope Ben's work will encourage more bryologists to visit these rainforests, to tolerate their drizzle, midges and misery, and to enjoy their wonderful mosses and liverworts.

Congratulations to Ben in producing such an excellent, enjoyable, and exciting booklet. It can be downloaded as a pdf from the internet – just search for Drizzle, midges and moss.

John Birks

e john.birks@uib.no