

Bookreview

M. SUCCOW and L. JESCHKE

MOORE IN DER LANDSCHAFT

[Mires in the landscape]

Urania Publishing House, Leipzig—Jena—Berlin, 1986, 268 pp., 69 Figs., 150 colour pictures.

Two German specialists combined their knowledge, abilities and views to write a book about mires, offering general information on their origin, development, ecology, life, distribution, economic as well as non-economic values, conservation and protection. MICHAEL SUCCOW contributed especially to those parts which deal with the stratigraphy, hydrology and typology of mires, while LEBRECHT JESCHKE was chiefly engaged in writing the chapters concerned with the specific features of mire vegetation and mire conservancy. Together they succeeded in producing a book on a high level of scholarship and, at the same time, fully understandable to the general public, which fully corresponds to the intentions and traditions of the Urania Publishing House in the GDR.

The book opens with a historical survey of the relations between men (and the human community in general) and mires. The chapter about the functions of virgin and disturbed peatlands in landscape economy and ecology is a highly important section of the work: it presents plenty of evidence concerning the disadvantages and troubles (hydrologic, pedologic, agronomic) to be faced after converting native mires into cultivated lands. The following part of the book describes the variety of peat-forming processes, the ecological and hydrological mire types, presenting examples of corresponding mire stratigraphy and development. The plant and animal life in various mire types is the subject of other chapter. The geography and description of Central-European mires and the inventory of their peat resources are presented in great detail. The reader will find here all the basic information on, and the characteristics of, the most important mire sites in this part of Europe, e.g., Federsee, Wurzacher Ried, Biebrza peatlands, etc. The Czechoslovak sites mentioned are those of Soos, Mrtvý luh, Úpskérašliniště (Koppenplanmoor), Rejviz, Stankovany and others. Most of the places described in the text are documented with unusually well chosen and printed colour pictures, taken either by authors themselves or by their German colleagues or friends from abroad. A short survey of mires and their peat resources outside Central Europe closes this part of the book. The next chapter is concerned with the different ways and history of peatland cultivation and peat utilization in agriculture, power engineering, chemical and pharmaceutical industry, balneology, etc. Special emphasis on the perspectives of peat use in the new forms of biotechnology and economy serves as a warning against imprudent peat and peatland exploitation at present. The final section of "Mires in the landscape" provides information on the protection of mires in various European countries and briefly (maybe too briefly) mentions the possibilities of conservation, management, stabilization and renaturation of mires which have stood for centuries under an unusually intense anthropic pressure. A subject index and a selective bibliography of publications on various aspects of mires are appended.

The book by Succow and Jeschke is useful for all who have anything to do with the exploitation and protection of mires or who are simply fond of these remarkable natural phenomena in Central Europe and feel, together with the authors, that "Moore sind heute ein kostbarer Naturschatz der ganzen Menschheit".

KAMIL RYBNÍČEK