

New Books

Sanford M. & Fisk R. (2010): *A Flora of Suffolk*. DK & MN Sanford, Ipswich, 549 pages, 15 figures, approximately 450 colour photographs, more than 1000 maps, the majority on coloured primers, hardcover, format 30.4 × 21.3 cm. ISBN 978 0 9564584 0 7. Price £ 40.00.

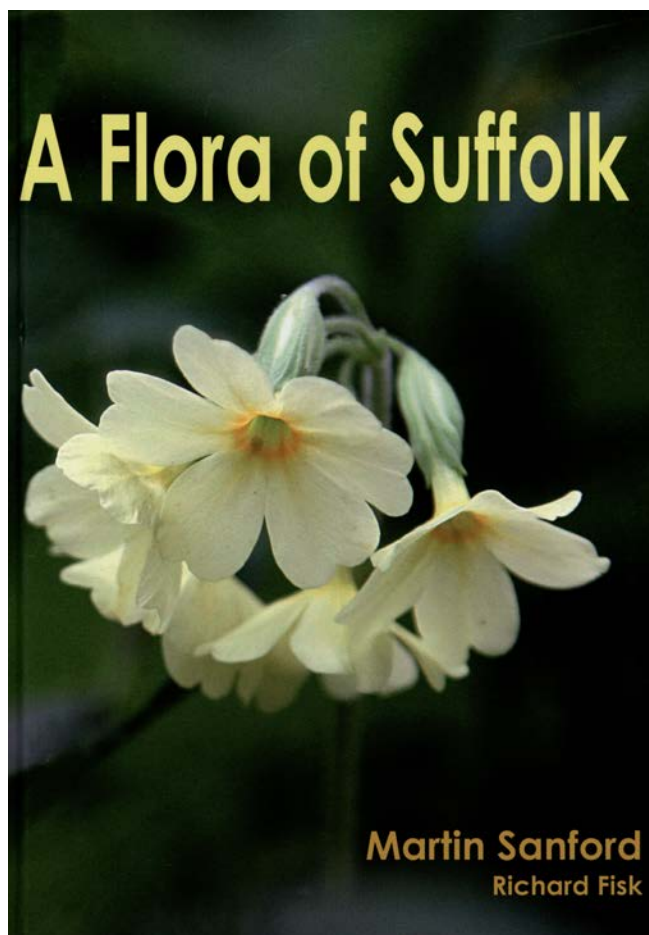
In the natural sciences, including botany, one of the features which distinguishes the British Isles from most continental countries is an extremely well developed amateur participation. A seemingly endless multitude of naturalists has ensured that the Kingdom's flora and fauna are well known. The publication of local Floras is one manifestation of this and now Suffolk has joined the group of UK counties possessing their own Flora of vascular plants and bryophytes. It is quite a large county situated in the east of England adjacent to the North Sea and bordered on the north, west and south by Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Essex. It is a lowland region, mostly less than 60 m in altitude, although rising to 128 m in the south-west. Despite its apparent monotony the county has highly diverse habitats resulting in a rich vascular plant and bryophyte flora.

The Flora is the result of several years' work by amateurs. It includes stoneworts, vascular plants and bryophytes, the last independently surveyed by Richard Fisk, Suffolk's only active bryologist. In the county's modest area occur 18 stoneworts, 2 club mosses, 5 horsetails, 30 ferns, 2500 vascular plants and 400 bryophytes. These are impressive numbers but it should be noted that the vascular plant total includes numerous aliens. The distribution of many species is shown on dot maps of 2 km grid squares printed on coloured backgrounds.

The Flora is written with amazing accuracy and diligence and each page reveals great attention has been paid to every detail. The introductory part gives a detailed description of the Suffolk landscape, its history from the Neolithic period and a review of plant habitats. There follows a history of botanical studies in Suffolk and the biographies of researchers from the sixteenth century when herbals (including that of John Gerard) were established, up to recent times. It concludes with a detailed analysis of the Flora, richly illustrated with numerous charts, maps and tables.

The main part of the work is an overview of the species. For each of these detailed habitat requirements are given as well as the place of origin for introduced or naturalised species. Many are illustrated with excellent photographs. Distribution map analysis shows great accuracy in site surveying, particularly for common species, as the level of square coverage is impressive.

The book itself is impressive too, both editorially and in printing. Rich content, photographic documentation and excellent composition of the text make association with the book a real pleasure. This is indeed a model local Flora and it is surprising that it has been written by amateurs and privately printed. One can only congratulate and be envious.



Reviewer's address: Ryszard Ochrya, Laboratory of Bryology, Institute of Botany, Polish Academy of Sciences, Lubicz 46, 31-512 Kraków, Poland; e-mail: r.ochrya@botany.pl