

Annual General meeting

The 3rd Annual General Meeting of the Australasian Mycological Society will be held in Sydney later this year. It is anticipated that the AGM will be held in November at the University of New South Wales, along with a half day symposium where a number of student and newly graduated members will present seminars. Details of date and place will be included in the next *Newsletter*. Members wishing to place items on the agenda should contact the Secretary.

Call for nominations

Nominations are requested from members of the Australasian Mycological Society for the following positions in the Society:

President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and two Councillors.

Nominations should be submitted in writing, signed by two financial members of the Society and accompanied by the written consent of the candidate. Nominations should be received by the Secretary by 14 August 1998. Objects and rules of the Society can be found in the *Newsletter* for March 1995, or can be obtained on request from the Secretary.

According to the constitution of the Society, the President and Vice-President must stand down after three years.

Please consider nominating as an Office Bearer or Councillor

The founding council has served unchanged for three years—it would be great to have some fresh faces on council.

Payment of subscriptions by New Zealand members

To help members avoid costly currency conversion charges, it was resolved at the last AGM that New Zealand members could, if they wish, pay subscriptions to a New Zealand member of Council, who would then forward the bulk amount each year to the Treasurer. Subscriptions paid in this way will be the same amount in \$NZ as the current \$AUS subscription. New Zealand members may direct their payments in \$NZ to Peter Buchanan at Landcare Research, Private Bag 92170, Auckland, New Zealand. *Please make cheques payable to 'Foray account'.*

New membership categories—Concessional Member/Sustaining Member

The Concessional Member category replaces the Student Member, and now covers students, retirees, and those receiving a government pension. The rate for this category is the same as the old Student Member category. The new Sustaining Member category will have an annual fee three times the ordinary membership fee. Sustaining Members will be listed in each *Newsletter*.

Tom May

Secretary, Australasian Mycological Society

BOOK REVIEWS

Protocols for an All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory of Fungi in a Costa Rican Conservation Area by Amy L. Rossman, Rodham E. Tulloss, Thomas E. O'Dell and R. Greg Thorn (1998). 195 pp. (Hardcover.) ISBN 1-887905-05-7. Parkway Publishers, Inc. Box 3678, Boone, NC 28607, USA. Email: aluri@netins.net; <http://www.netins.net/showcase/alurir>. Price \$US35.00

For the past 25 years, my fungal studies have mainly concerned the identification of the higher fungi and their systematic relationships—principally agarics. Whilst some ecological aspects do play a role in systematics, the dynamics of fungal biodiversity are not usually considered other than in subjective or intuitive 'feelings' about species richness of particular habitats or the requirements of a species for one or more very well defined environments. It was therefore with a great deal of interest that I examined this book which considered the world of mycology from a very different perspective. The book sets out a series of protocols which allow the user to conduct a biodiversity survey of all fungi in a given region, and in addition, provides standardised procedures for sampling, storing and culturing the various fungi as well as the practical aspects of funding, staffing and equipping such a project.

The introductory chapter of the book commences by reinforcing the concept of biological wealth of the fungi: 'Fungi constitute the most diverse group of eukaryotic organisms on earth' and continues by stressing the critical importance of these organisms in the biosphere both ecologically and economically. Each sentence is chosen to display as forcefully as possible the impact of fungi on the world's (and by extension, human) existence.

The book concentrates on sampling methods applicable to the forest ecosystems of Costa Rica, but within these ecosystems are found so many variations that the Costa Rican ecosystems are more or less immediately transportable to any other geographical location. The authors are to be congratulated on their integrity in enumerating the immense difficulties involved in measuring fungal biodiversity. They recognise that the ephemeral nature of most fungal fruiting bodies, their associations with many kinds of substrates, their seasonal appearances and the problems of obtaining many species in pure culture means that fungi cannot be sampled with a single class of techniques and satisfy the reader as to the reasons for the series of later chapters on sampling protocols.

The protocols themselves are set out as an ordered sequence of steps and the directions contained in each step make it virtually impossible for a mistake to be made. Whilst the book's protocols cover all organisms which may be considered as fungi (including lichenised fungi and myxomycetes), any biological survey of a subset of the fungi can be completed by using only the protocols written for that subset.

The thoroughness with which the book approaches all aspect of its surveys is readily seen in chapters 6 and 7. In chapter 6, the protocols for herbarium storage of all dried fungal material are defined, while in chapter 7, the various media formulations and culture procedures are set out in a step-by-step procedure together with directives for managing the resulting culture collection. One of the most difficult areas of study is the sampling of mycorrhizae which requires meticulous planning in sampling and identifying the relevant fungi. The instructions contained in the protocols are so simple and detailed that relative novices should be able to conduct the procedures given minimal training in laboratory techniques. Indeed, the structure of this chapter could almost be equated with a student's manual detailing the isolation and culturing of mycorrhizal fungi. Similar statements could also be made regarding the chapters on soil, rock and aquatic fungi as well as that on fungi associated with animal products.

Of necessity, a full fungal biodiversity survey requires considerable resources and the final chapters of the book address the staff required for the survey, the equipment and the funding required. While the scope of the book's project is much larger than many projects envisaged by most readers, the book's details of various project areas would nevertheless be useful in setting up cost analyses of smaller projects.

The book's bibliography is extremely large and is a miniature resource for the fungal biodiversity survey in itself. All the various aspects of the book have been sectioned in the bibliography so that the user needs only to go to the relevant section to find the references relevant to the topic rather than wade through a single, large list of cited authors and books. There is also a very good general index to the many headings and topics of the book. The book is well bound and the setting out is crisp and simple to follow.

My initial pleasure with this book has not been diminished after examination and if anything, increased. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that the initial chapter of this book would have great value as required reading for any student of the fungi, and would also be of immense benefit as a politician's guide to the importance and usefulness of the fungi in world health and economics. It is rare to see a book in which the desired outcomes (or products) of a fungal biodiversity survey are carefully listed and then elaborated upon in order to show how each outcome can provide benefits to the organisation/country conducting the survey.

This is certainly not a volume for the general taxonomist whose only concern is identifying fungi, however, for applied work on the fungi, this volume allows the user to plan systematic inventories of the fungi of an area and then suggest ways in which this information can be utilised. Aspects of this book might be very useful to the leaders of such projects as Fungimap and would be of interest to persons involved in fungal population ecology where standardised protocols are required if samples are to be compared. Certainly the contents of chapter one would be of value to anyone in the various environmental departments of Australia. I have pleasure in recommending this book.

Tony Young
Honorary Research Associate
State Herbarium, Queensland