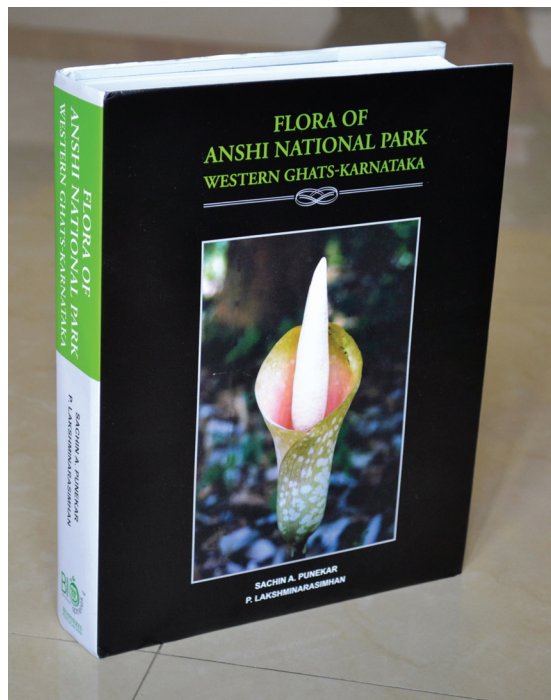


## Book Review

Sachin A. Puneekar and P. Lakshminarasimhan 2011

### Flora of Anshi National Park, Western Ghats – Karnataka

Published by Biospheres Publication, Lakshmi Nagar, Parvati, Pune 411 009, Maharashtra, India. (biospherespublication@gmail.com). Hard bound, 29x22 cm with 990 colour photographs and six maps. ISBN nil, price Rs 1800.00 (US \$90). Pages 672 + viii.



Anshi National Park in Joida taluka of Uttara Kannada district in Karnataka occupies an area of 340 km<sup>2</sup> and harbours 250 km<sup>2</sup> pristine forests. W A Talbot, T R Bell and L J Sedgwick explored Anshi in the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century but their collections were limited to less than 200 species. Since then no botanists have conducted any serious exploration in Anshi. This Flora describes 923 species, three subspecies and five varieties of flowering plants and one species of gymnosperm. This account includes seven new species and one new variety, besides one new record for India and six new records for Karnataka. These facts underscore the importance of this work.

Each species is provided with legitimate name, basionym if any, important synonyms (citing different Floras relevant to the area) and local names in Kannada and Kunabi. This is followed by good taxonomic descriptions of species, details on phenology and references to illustrations.

Species distribution in Anshi and, if a species in Anshi is endemic to the Western Ghats, its state wise distribution within the Western Ghats are provided.

The most interesting and, perhaps, the unique part under the subhead *Ecology* is the observations the authors report on animals that have one or other kind of dependence with respect to 76 plant species, a feature no other Floras generally account for, though modern Floras should invariably attempt. This pleasantly and constantly reminds us that plants are part of the dynamic ecosystem and they co exist with animals in the forests and both interact for their mutual benefits. *Uses* cover folk and tribal utilization of plant parts. Another commendable feature of the work is that it is richly illustrated with about 990 good colour photographs of plants and animals in the study area. Authors have taken, to the extent possible, a comprehensive approach in dealing with the flora of Anshi National Park.

The book carries the air of a Ph.D dissertation. I cite just a few examples. *Introduction* needed much pruning to get more focus on Anshi and its issues (eg, over discussed problems of biodiversity conservation). Reorganisation (eg, 1.1 Area under study and 3.1 Boundaries, 4.2.4 Butterflies and 4.2.5. Other invertebrates) and deletion of a few subtitles (eg, under Topography and General Features and under Forest Biota) and tables (eg, 1, 4, 6, 8, 11) would have made the text more lively than routine. Language suffers from many infirmities, mainly ambiguous construction and syntax. (eg, 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> sentences of the first paragraph).

At many places where, say, a superfluous combination or a new synonym made by a taxonomy worker is not agreeable, authors do not reject it categorically but make a passive mention of it. This approach may be appropriate for a Ph.D dissertation but not for a Flora since such combinations or synonyms continue to remain sources of confusion (*pp.* 81, 84, 146, 168, 235). Identifying a plant as a keystone species is an

elaborate ecological task and designating *Syzygium caryophyllatum* (p. 222) as a keystone species gives very wrong message about keystone species.

Note under *Tinospora sinensis* says: A section of the stem shows the *characteristic anomalous structure* of the Menispermaceous wood. A user would benefit more if authors say directly what this structure is. The text mentions that *Litsea travancorica* (pp.397-398) is endemic to Karnataka and Tamil Nadu parts of the Western Ghats but cites in nomenclature *Flora of Thiruvananthapuram* (the species does occur in Kerala). Common Leopard butterfly is named as Malabar tree nymph and vice-versa.

Two column text and intermittent one column keys, grey circles marring the page numbers and separate rendering of legends for 126 photo plates cause inconvenience to readers. Elaborate description of pollination and seed dispersal of one or two species (p. 512) disturbs the diction and evenness of the text. One will be disappointed to see that there are no line drawings in *Flora of Anshi*, even for two taxa newly published in the work. Photographs, however good they may be, cannot

substitute line drawings in Taxonomy. Ferns and fern allies, fungi and lichens enumerated in the *Introduction* are not brought under index; so also all the zoological (latin) names.

Are all these really serious flaws, especially when many Ph.D dissertations straight away come out of press as *Floras*? My answer is that I do not want to treat *Flora of Anshi National Park* – a Flora so seriously attempted and so sincerely brought out – under that category. A good editing would have saved the text from most of these flaws. Taxonomists need not be good editors but unfortunately our publishers, in general, do not keep good editors with them.

Anyone who loves plant taxonomy to flourish imbibing the best traits of the past and absorbing new knowledge relevant to the present will happily recommend this justifiably priced Flora as a *must* to botanists in R&D centres and Universities, who directly or indirectly carry research interests in flowering plants of India.

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