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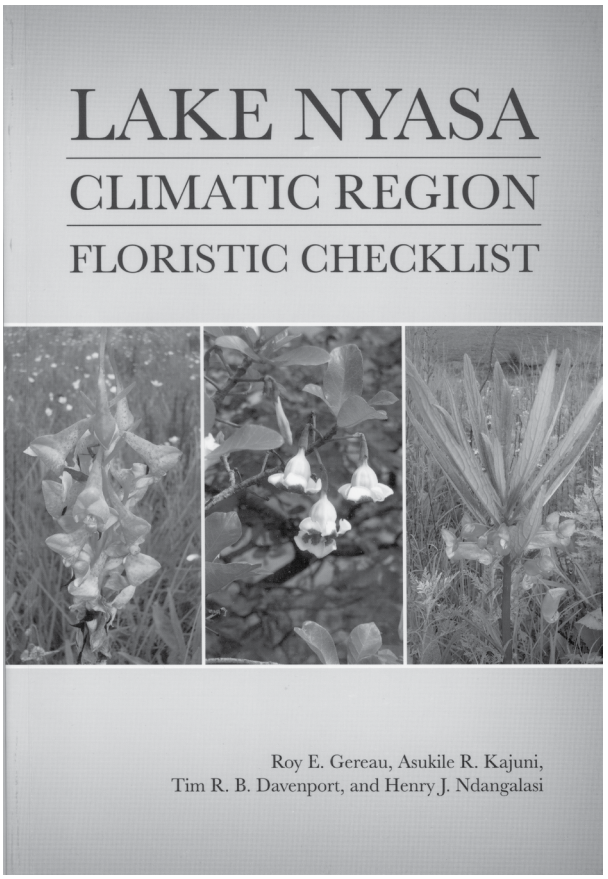
BOOK REVIEW

R.E. Gereau, A.R. Kajuni, T.R.B. Davenport, H.J. Ndangalasi (2012)
Lake Nyassa Climatic Region: Floristic Checklist
Monographs in Systematic Botany from the Missouri Botanical Garden 122: vi + 118 pp.
St Louis, Missouri Botanical Garden Press
ISBN 978-1-935641-10-0; US$ 49.00



The biological exploration of the interior of tropical Africa started in the second half of the nineteenth century. Routine bulk collection of specimens still continues, especially for flora making, for example in Gabon and Equatorial Guinea. However, these days collectors often have a more targeted approach, by focusing on a particular taxonomic group or on an area of special interest such as an under-explored region or a biodiverse area. The Lake Nyassa Climatic Region (LNCR) in Tanzania is such a hotspot. It is a massif on the junction of the eastern and western parts of the Great Rift, and to the east extends to the Eastern Arc Mountains. The LNCR shows many similarities to the latter mountains but is botanically distinct. The region supplies 60% of the hydroelectric power used in Tanzania and is economically important, inter alia for the production of cash crops. Good management practices are needed to reconcile the economic exploitation of the region and its unique natural environment. This checklist is produced as part of efforts by the Wild Conservation Society to better understand the natural resources of the LNCR and guide decision-makers.

The checklist is preceded, after a general introduction to the region, by short chapters on climate, geology and soils, ecology, collecting history and conservation status. I feel it lacks a more detailed analysis of the data such as the number and location of collections, the statistics of their distribution over the six recognized mountain ranges and an appreciation of the effort of individual collectors. This analysis would have been feasible had the basic data of collections been made available as supplementary electronic material.

The floristic survey of the LNCR resulted in recording 1736 vascular plant species belonging to 170 families, of which nine species are new for the *Flora of tropical East Africa* area. The checklist is organized alphabetically by family within three higher taxa, Pteridophyta, Pinophyta and Magnoliophyta. For each taxon is given: the name and a single reference to its use (mostly *Flora of tropical East Africa*); a short characterization of its habit and habitat; the distribution in LNCR by means of abbreviations for the six mountain ranges recognized in the LNCR, and a short citation (collector and number) of a single representative specimen.

The LNCR lies in the Uluguru-Mlanje regional mountain system of the Afromontane and Afroalpine archipelago-like regional centres of endemism and in the Zambezian regional centre of endemism (White 1978, 1983). Adding chorological information to the species treatments would have allowed an interesting biogeographical analysis of the checklist.

Number 122 of the *Monographs in Systematic Botany from the Missouri Botanical Garden* should be on the bookshelf of anyone interested in conservation and management of natural resources in the LNCR and the Great Rift area. It is of interest to students of afrotropical floristics and biogeography.

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