

book is that the earth contains about as many species of soil fungi as the number of described species of organisms (c. 1.5 million).

In short, this book is an excellent introduction and overview of the topic of soil biodiversity. It is a comprehensive and stimulating, yet succinct, review of a part of biodiversity that has been hidden beneath our feet for far too long. It is time for all of us working on biodiversity to give appropriate attention to the belowground biodiversity that drives so many of the ecosystem services that benefit the aboveground biota we are seeking to conserve. Too bad the price is not as user-friendly as the book.

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Palms of the Fiji Islands by Dick Watling, illustrated by George Bennett (2005), 192 pp., Environmental Consultants, Fiji. ISBN 982 9047 02 4 (pbk), USD 39.95 (for ordering see <http://www.environmentfiji.com>).

This book describes the ecology, distribution and conservation of the 31 known species of palm, 25 of which are indigenous and of which 23 or 24 are endemic, growing in the wild in the Fiji Islands. Each species is illustrated with colour plates. The introductory sections include a

consideration of the conservation of Fijian vegetation and of the palms in particular.

Lapland: A Natural History by Derek Ratcliffe, illustrated by Mike Unwin (2005), 352 pp., T & A.D. Poyser, London. ISBN 0 7136 6529 7 (hbk), GBP 40.00.

This book provides the first in-depth study of the natural history of Lapland in English. It includes a number of colour photographs of landscapes and wildlife, and numerous distribution maps. Following four introductory chapters there are six chapters dealing with the major habitats and a chapter on wildlife conservation.

The Top 50 Mediterranean Island Plants. Wild Plants At the Brink of Extinction, and What is Needed to Save Them edited by Bertrand de Montmollin & Wendy Strahm (2005), x + 110 pp., IUCN, Gland, Switzerland. ISBN 2 8317 0832 X (pbk). Unpriced.

This short, non-technical book presents a selection of 50 of the most threatened plant species growing on Mediterranean islands. A double page spread is presented for each species, including a colour photograph and distribution map. The aim is to draw attention to the vulnerability of island floras in the Mediterranean. The Top 50 website is at <http://www.iucn.org/themes/ssc/plants/top50>, from where a copy of the book is also available as a PDF file.