

***Moss and Lichen*. Elizabeth Lawson. 2024. Reaktion Books, London, UK. 256 pp. ISBN 978-1-78914-9939-5.**

Beautifully produced, and amply documented with current and historic references, American naturalist Elizabeth Lawson's *Moss and Lichen* is a must-read for anyone even faintly interested in these extraordinary life forms.

Published in England as one of Reaktion Press's botanical series, the 14x22x2.5 centimetre volume is a visual delight. High quality reproductions of art and photographs of cryptogams and the scientists and naturalists who have studied them appear on nearly every page. Lawson's text manages to weave together complex scientific and historic details in easy to read prose, spanning evolution, discovery, description and molecular investigation of mosses and lichens. Her chapter headings hint at her approach to unveiling the complexities of the organisms and their interactions with each other and their environments: The Cryptogamic Carpet; Moss: Versatile minimalist; Lichen: Complex Individuality; Cosmopolitan Extremophiles, etc. The Addenda include a Timeline, extensive References, scientific and popular Further Reading, Associations and websites, and of course, Acknowledgements and an Index.

Lawson obviously researched an enormous quantity of material on mosses and lichens including scientific literature (Todd N. Rosenstiel et al, *Sex-specific Volatile Compounds Influence Microarthropod-Mediated Fertilization of Moss*. Nature. 2012.) and popular level publications, including websites (*Can You Recognize These Three Common Churchyard Mosses?* www.greenchristian.org.uk. 2023.) She weaves the information together smoothly. The historical perspective she provides on the development of scientific investigation in both fields isn't boring or dry – she is nothing if not a good writer and has taken great care to document extensively. Inevitably, there are small glitches that occur in a work encompassing as detailed and complex as the world of mosses and lichens. Descriptions of the habitat and substrate preferences of Lungwort (*Lobaria pulmonaria*, for example, are not footnoted but describe conditions that are generally true but not totally. While it does like open woodlands, in the Maritimes, Lungwort is also frequent in more closed canopy situations of mixed forested wetlands and can occur on conifer bark in fairly low light, a detail that doesn't negate what she describes, but simply isn't

the whole picture. This is nitpicking- the book is comprehensively researched and admirably woven together for a wide audience in addition to being a joy to look through.

Frances Anderson

Nova Scotia Museum, 1747 Summer Street

Halifax, NS B3H 3A6