

BOOK REVIEW

AHMED IBRAHIM AWALE, FAISAL JAMA GELLE, AND HELEN PICKERING. 2024. **Introduction to Plants in Central Somaliland Hordhac ku saabsan dhirta ka baxda badhtamaha Soomaalilaand.** (ISBN 978-1-889878-76-8, flexbind). BRIT Press, Fort Worth Botanic Garden, Botanical Research Institute of Texas, Fort Worth, Texas 76107-3400, U.S.A. (Orders: shopbritpress.org). \$29.00 US, 240 pp., 143 color illus. 2 maps, 5.75" × 8.35".

Reading this attractive and unique diglot book brings me both a sense of nostalgia coupled with optimism for the future. Having taught range ecology at both the Agricultural Faculty of the Somali National University and the adjacent Agricultural Secondary School near Afgooye from 1982–1984, I recognized many familiar species. If only such a book like this had been available 40 years ago when we went on field trips! There were some basic field guides available in Kenya, but the floristic differences from Somalia limited their usefulness.

This book is well illustrated by clear photos of all the species described. Its size and sturdy binding make it handy for bringing into the field. Beginning with a description of the basic natural regions of Somaliland and ending with References, Glossary, Index and Appendix, Awale, Gelle, and Pickering have produced a very useful guide to common plants of this region. Distribution for each species is clearly stated with many regional endemics highlighted.

Of course, space was limited, and choices had to be made regarding the inclusion of which species. From my range ecology perspective, I would have liked to have seen a few more trees and shrubs included, both what used to be lumped together in the genus *Acacia*, as well as more *Commiphora* and *Terminalia*. Not only are these genera of trees very important in the lives of the pastoralists, this semi-arid part of the Horn of Africa is very rich in speciation. Some additional ethnographic information regarding uses by humans and livestock would also have been welcome.

However, those remarks do not detract from my appreciation for the hard work that the authors put into their pioneering book. My hope is that they will produce additional volumes in the future. While the geographic focus is central Somaliland, this book is also useful for adjacent low-elevation areas in neighboring lands: Somalia, Djibouti, the Somali State of eastern Ethiopia and the Northeastern Province of Kenya. Being a diglot book, with all information presented in English and Somali, I heartily recommend it for several different audiences:

- local urbanized residents desiring to re-connect with the rich botanical resources that were familiar to their nomadic parents and grandparents
- Members of the Somali Diaspora returning for visits or work
- Iexpatriates working or travelling in this part of the Horn of Africa

—Michael H. Madany, Renton, Washington, U.S.A.