

The bibliography includes 791 entries, almost entirely books; the journals included are *The Herbal Review* and *Economic Botany*, and the websites are *The Plant List*, *Tropicos* and *Multilingual Multiscript Plant Name Database*. The publication date is 2013 but there are no references after 2010, except the websites. The majority of the references were published 1970-1994 (495, 61%), only 3.5% (37) since 2000. Rydberg's *Flora of the Prairies and Plains* (1971) is in the bibliography but not the *Flora of North America* (1993+). Also not in the bibliography or the entries are references to German Commission E's work on herbal medicine or *The Physician's Desk Reference for Herbal Medicine*, sources that I use to check information on medicinal plants. The result is that I do not know whether I can trust the information presented. Old isn't necessarily inaccurate, but the lack of recent information is worrisome. Without citations within the entries and 741 references, the source of the information cannot be readily identified.

This is an amazing piece of work, compiling an enormous array of popular facts about important plants. There are wonderful pieces of information included and the entries often give a good review of the plant's role in human history. However, with old references and no internal citations, the quality of particular facts is impossible to evaluate. *Plant Biographies* is described as the first edition of an ongoing project, so perhaps these problems will be remedied in future editions.

--Kathy Keeler, *A Wandering Botanist* (<http://awanderingbotanist.com>)

Dispelling the Darkness: Voyage in the Malay Archipelago and the Discovery of Evolution by Wallace and Darwin

John van Wyhe

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Alfred Russel (yes, one "l") Wallace has variously been described as forgotten, neglected, obscure, brilliant, "the greatest field biologist of the nineteenth century," co-discoverer with Darwin of evolution, the first to write down the theory of evolution, famous for being forgotten, as being robbed by Darwin and Victorian society of his priority of discovery, as having forced Darwin to publish his theory when he did, an outsider, "more myth than man" (p. 3), and in many additional terms. Some have even gone so far as to suggest that Darwin received Wallace's essay on evolution (the one read together with two essays by Darwin at the Linnean Society of London meeting on 1 July 1858) weeks or even months before admitting that he had and either borrowed from it or plagiarized it. A few have described Wallace as a hanger-on and others have described him as the man who discovered evolution. Many books and essays have been written on the subject, and together they have created or, as this book states, helped "to reinforce the image of a legendary Wallace who is very different from the historical Wallace" (p. 5).

This book aims to set the record straight, and few historians of biology are better equipped and more qualified to write such a tome than John van Wyhe, founder and editor of Darwin Online (<http://darwin-online.org.uk/>) and Wallace Online (<http://wallace-online.org/>) as well as editor or author of a number of other books on Darwin (full disclosure: I know van Wyhe; we lectured in the same symposium on Darwin and Orchids in Singapore in 2011).

The first chapter sets the scene of the times and provides brief outlines of Darwin's and Wallace's backgrounds and some of the people and writings that may have influenced them (e.g., Malthus, Lamarck, Ida Laura Pfeiffer, Charles Lyell). It makes clear that Wallace came from a middle-class English

family. His father was a solicitor who inherited property that could generate a good income, but lost it in bad investments and subsequently moved from London to the Welsh border. Thus, reports that Wallace came from a working-class Welsh family are incorrect. In those days this made a difference. At present, rising from poverty would make Wallace look good. The Darwins were made wealthier due to intermarriage with the Wedgwoods (dinnerware china fame). That is why "Darwin never had a job, unlike Wallace who would have so many" (p. 11).

Chapters 3–9 deal in great detail with Wallace's travels, the ships he sailed on, the locales he visited, collecting methods, dwellings in the places he visited, illnesses, individuals he employed, his notes and notebooks, the start of his writings, and even durians—the fruit famed for an odor offensive to westerners and a taste that led Wallace to describe it as the "king of fruits" and "a food of the most exquisite flavor" (p. 91), and certainly a fruit I greatly enjoy and eagerly seek out when in Southeast Asia. What I find very impressive in these chapters is the careful dating of events, references to port records regarding the movement of ships, and great attention to details. These chapters convert Wallace from a myth to a man and explain how a surveyor became a great naturalist.

Chapter 10 is a detective story. Did he (Darwin) or didn't he? Did Darwin delay publication of his theory of evolution after formulating in ca. 1838 and if he did, why? The chapter addresses the questions methodically and concludes that there was... Well, those interested in the answer should read the book. All I can say here is that van Wyhe is convincing.

Then there is the question of when did Darwin receive Wallace's essay. Was it on 18 June 1858 or much earlier? Van Wyhe suggests that it was received on 18 June 1858 on the basis of careful reconstruction of Wallace's movements, places and dates of posting of mail, arrivals and departures of five ships, and overland travel from Suez to Alexandria (p. 225). His argument is constructed very well and leaves no place for the suggestion that Darwin plagiarized Wallace and/or robbed him of fame.

Van Wyhe's style is clear and easy to read. His facts are carefully substantiated. He approaches all issues even handedly. The book is well illustrated even if the printing of a few illustrations leaves something to be desired (but some of this was improved and illustrations were added to a paperback also

published in 2013; see Literature Cited). This may not be the last book those interested in Wallace may read, but my view is that it will be one the best.

And, an explanation: My interest in Wallace was generated by his essay and comments (Wallace, 1867a, 1867b) in support of Darwin's suggestion (Darwin, 1862a, 1862b) that *Angraecum sesquipedale* is pollinated by a moth that has a very long proboscis (Arditti et al., 2012).

—Joseph Arditti, University of California, Irvine, California, USA

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