

Editorial

Special Issue: Vegetation Science in Perspective

The structure and functioning of vegetation have since long been common objectives of both botanical and ecological studies. The Section for Vegetation Research of the Royal Botanical Society of The Netherlands has been organizing scientific meetings on all kinds of topics of vegetation science since November 1933, when it was established. In the period 1933–61 one or two scientific meetings have been organized annually, and since then the frequency has raised to three scientific meetings per year, including a number of special symposia. Being the first section of the Royal Botanical Society, the one-hundredth scientific meeting took place in 1979, and the 150th meeting in 1995 coincided with the 150th anniversary of the Royal Botanical Society of The Netherlands. The Section for Vegetation Research, therefore, decided to commemorate the occasion of its 150th meeting with a special symposium on 23 November 1995. This meeting was held at the University of Nijmegen, and attended by approximately 200 vegetation scientists, showing the consistently high interest for this branch of botany in The Netherlands. At the 150th meeting an honorary membership of the Royal Botanical Society of The Netherlands was awarded to one of its eminent members, Prof. Eddy van der Maarel from Uppsala University (Sweden).

The jubilee meeting focused on vegetation science in The Netherlands and eight invited speakers presented overviews of both historical and recent trends in research in their branch of vegetation science. Attention was paid to both fundamental and applied aspects of vegetation research, and the lectures were grouped into three hierarchical levels: species, vegetation and landscape level. The basic role of phytosociology in Dutch vegetation science was also treated. Because of many environmental stresses in The Netherlands and their impacts on structure and functioning of various vegetation types, the importance of vegetation research for nature conservation and restoration was highlighted as one of the most important parts of applied research on nature conservation in our country. With this programme the section tried to present a stimulating and comprehensive overview of efforts to unravel the factors affecting the functioning of vegetation for the benefit of conservation and restoration purposes.

In this special issue of *ABN* six papers presented at this meeting are published. Roland Bobbink, Titia Zonneveld and Jelte van Andel formed the editorial committee for this issue. The colour plate on the front cover was kindly made available by Roland Bobbink. It represents a wet heath with mass flowering of *Narthecium ossifragum* between the grass *Molinia caerulea* in a nature reserve near Staverden, The Netherlands (Summer 1995).

THE EDITORS