

## Iconographic floras and checklists – a tool for future research in Irano-Turanian floristic region

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Documentation of biodiversity has become an increasing task today in order to have reliable data on biogeography and conservation of a distinct area. There is a huge amount of herbarium material in museums which is still the basis for taxonomy and nomenclature. However, increasing difficulties in accessibility of many regions and increasing administrative barriers make it necessary to use the good photographic tools of today. They enable us to make documentations without destroying habitats. Profiling of plant individuals can help not only in education but also as an amendment to herbarium sampling. Both approaches are preconditions for updating floristic checklists.

As an example we refer to the „Field Guide Afghanistan – Flora and Vegetation“ and to the „Vascular Plants of Afghanistan - an augmented checklist“. Both books have been produced to be distributed for free within the country to all universities, high schools, libraries, ministries etc. The effect is two-fold. On one side education and curiosity of pupils is enhanced, on the other side professional projects on environmental issues, on nature protection, on agriculture and forestry have a better and sound reliable botanical basis. Some interesting results on the flora of Afghanistan will be presented and discussed.

With digital cameras it is possible to make good collections of slides if some preconditions are fulfilled. In cooperation with botanical institutions iconographic guides can be produced and with taxonomists a checklist can be maintained and amended. In addition digital photographs can be stored in data-bases (e.g. plant-guides at Field-Museum Chicago etc.) and thus are available worldwide. There is already an appreciable though not sufficient number of scientists working on systematics in the region. Their cooperation could produce field guides and checklists for specific areas. This is an urgent need for many parts of the Irano-Turanian floristic region.