



A GUIDE TO FINDING MOSSES IN BERKSHIRE, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE & OXFORDSHIRE

Peter Creed & Tom Haynes

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My first impression of this small guide was that the title is a little misleading. As 'A guide to finding mosses in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire', I had expected to be reviewing an account of localities within the three counties where I might expect to find interesting bryophytes, or a guide to where I might look to find a particular species. In fact, it is really an identification guide to some of the mosses and liverworts found in the area, with some very brief information about localities. It is the second in a series of three similar guides produced by Pisces Publications, the others focusing on Fungi, and Orchids of the three counties.

The book is pocket-sized, reasonably priced (£5.95 from the publishers) and very attractive to look through. It is clearly aimed at the complete beginner who wants to take their very first steps in bryology in the local area. An introductory section gives advice on checking the key features of a bryophyte, including some helpful line drawings. This is followed by a very brief list of important habitats, names of examples of each from the area, and English names of some typical bryophytes from those habitats.

The remainder of the book is an identification guide to 30 liverworts and 104 mosses, many found commonly within the region, others not so common but also of interest. The accounts are necessarily short, as the entire book is just over 70 pages, with two species covered on each small page. Each species is illustrated by a colour photograph of the plant growing *in situ*, together with a close-up showing leaves or other

structures in greater detail. All photographs were taken by one of the authors, Peter Creed. Brief notes indicate habitat, where to look for the moss or liverwort, identification features and similar species.

As a very introductory guide, attempting to draw the beginner into this field with a colourful and easy to use book, containing the minimum of technical detail, it works well. The main photographs of each species are generally of good quality and the descriptive notes helpful. The photographs showing close-up details are more of a mixed bag, some helpful, some adding little of value – line drawings would have been more helpful occasionally. The selection of species is good, with most of those that you might expect to find on every bryological excursion in the counties covered (with the exception of *Rhynchostegium confertum* perhaps), together with some less common ones and a rarity or two. I would query very few of the authors' selections: *Syntrichia ruralis* var. *ruraliformis* is included but not var. *ruralis*, much the commoner in our region. The rare *Scorpidium cossonii* is included, but not *Drepanocladus aduncus*, the commonest 'hook-moss' here. Typographical errors are very few.

This is definitely a book to recommend to the beginner, to slip into the pocket when out for a countryside walk. It will give pleasure to leaf through, helpful guidance, and hopefully, inspiration to take a budding interest further.

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