

## Foreword

The fifth book within the series “Lebensräume im inneren Ötztal” (Environments of the inner Ötztal) is focussed on bryophytes, a species group often ignored although occurring nearly everywhere in the Alps. Around 1080 bryophytes are known from Austria, about 960 are listed for the region Trentino-Alto Adige/Trentino-Südtirol in the respective websites. This book comprises an impressive number of more than 500 bryophytes from the valleys of the Austrian and South Tyrolean Central Alps (mainly Ötztal Alps). They resulted from collections along altitudinal gradients from the valley bottom up to more than 3000 m a.s.l.

Wolfgang K. Hofbauer and James H. Dickson, two outstanding bryophyte experts, are responsible for the documentation and determination.

James H. Dickson was involved in the research boom, started after the discovery of the Iceman (Ötzi) in 1991 at the border between Austria and Italy. An incredible number of bryophyte fragments was found at and in the corpse of the Iceman, at his gear and clothing and in the sediment of the discovery place. 68 subfossil bryophyte species were identified to species level by James H. Dickson and they are now listed in this book.

Stimulated by the questions arising from the diversity of “Iceman bryophytes”, Wolfgang K. Hofbauer and James H. Dickson started a long-term investigation, studying transects along the valleys north and south of the Ice-

man discovery place. In total, 200 plots of 1 km<sup>2</sup> were examined over a period of more than two decades. The results of this comprehensive bryological mapping are presented in this book. For some selected species, distribution maps are shown. For all species of the recent bryoflora, the altitudinal ranges are provided as well as the uppermost known occurrence. These informations can be regarded as basic data for future bryological research of climate change effects in the investigation area.

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