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## Preface

The study on the life of plants in the Dolomites is a complex work, and the results largely exceed the limits of a single volume. In fact, the authors think it would be impossible to concentrate in one book an exhaustive account of the large assembly of original observations and experiments carried out by themselves over a period of several decades. Consequently, the authors, in accord with the publishers, decided to divide the results among three volumes. The first volume *Plant Life of the Dolomites: Vegetation Structure and Ecology* was published in 2014, and here we introduce the second volume on vegetation tables. The third volume *Plant Life of the Dolomites: Atlas of Flora* will contain chorological data.

In general, vegetation monographs are based on lengthy investigations and experiences carried out by different scientists under different conditions of space and time, so that the author of a concluding paper can operate based on the detailed results from a more or less rich previous literature. On the contrary, in the case of the Dolomites, the existing literature was scarce and the authors must play the role of both pioneering explorers and redactors of the final conclusions.

The first step of the naturalistic studies consists of the analysis (observations on single individuals, species or ecosystems); with the collection of data a synthesis is later necessary in order to reach the possibility of proposing a theory. The study of vegetation is primarily based on fieldwork (relevés, pedological observations and ecophysiological measures), and the collected data are the necessary basis for the subsequent elaborations. Usually only the results are exposed in detail and discussed, whereas field data are summarized or somewhat neglected. Here, as we are dealing with unusual dimensions and quantities of data (more than 2000 vegetation surveys), these would have excessively burdened a single book, forcing us to distribute the different arguments in three volumes.

In the first volume of *Plant Life of the Dolomites*, with the subtitle *Vegetation Structure and Ecology* (in the following cited as ‘Vol. 1’) a great quantity of information and comments are given; nevertheless, it contains only part of the data and observations collected during the many years of fieldwork and research on this argument. We considered it appropriate, in accord with the editors, to concentrate all data from our field research in separate treatments, which will be published in this second volume *Vegetation Tables* (in the following cited as ‘Vol. 2’) with the phytosociological tables and explicatory notes and in the third volume *Atlas of Flora* (‘Vol. 3’), in which all observations regarding flora will be exposed.

For easy comparison with the text and tables of the first volume, the chapter titles and headings in this second volume refer to the chapter and table numbers of the corresponding chapters in the first volume.

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Vegetation Tables

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