

Zeitschrift: Berichte des Geobotanischen Institutes der Eidg. Techn. Hochschule, Stiftung Rübel

Herausgeber: Geobotanisches Institut der Eidg. Techn. Hochschule, Stiftung Rübel

Band: 36 (1964)

Artikel: Ordination and classification of Swiss and Canadian coniferous forests by various biometric and other methods

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Kapitel: 3: Nomenclature and terminology

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-377646>

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(ACTON *et al.* 1960). The precipitation is approximately 15.5 inches (38.75 cm) of which approximately 6 inches (15 cm) falls during the summer. The soils are of the grey-wooded type, and generally belong to the «Waitville association» (MITCHELL *et al.* 1950). The region is part of the Mixedwood Section of the Boreal Forest (ROWE 1959).

The Swiss forests studied are located in the proximity of Roggwil, Langenthal (Kanton Bern) and Murgenthal (Kanton Aargau), between 47°21' and 47°16' latitude and between 7°48' and 7°54' longitude. They are situated on moraine deposits of the Riss period. The soils are mottled podzolized brown earths, and pseudogleys of the brown earth group (PALLMANN *et al.* 1943). The precipitation is approximately 116 cm of which 49% (56.8 cm)¹ occurs in the summer (MEYER 1949). These forests belong to the *Quercus-Abietetum* and partly to the *Melico-Fagetum* (FREHNER 1963). Some of these forests were described by Meyer as *Mastigobryeto-Piceetum abietosum* (MEYER 1949, 1954).

3. Nomenclature and terminology

The nomenclature of BINZ-BECHERER (1961) was followed for the *Pteridophyta* and the *Spermatophyta* in Switzerland. The nomenclature of BERTSCH (1959) was used for the Swiss *Musci*.

Where possible the nomenclature of FERNALD (1950) was followed for the Canadian *Pteridophyta* and *Spermatophyta*; elsewhere, RYDBERG'S (1954) nomenclature was followed. The nomenclature of GROUT (1928–1940) was used for the Canadian *Musci*, with the exception of *Calliergonella schreberi*, which is replaced by *Pleurozium schreberi* (Willd) Mitt.

The terms principal component, principal factor, and principal axe have the same meaning. The term factor, however, can easily be mistaken in ecological work for a habitat factor, which it is not. Therefore, the term principal factor is not used in this publication. The term factor is used exclusively in the sense of habitat factor. Wherever other features of these habitats or plant communities were included in the analysis (e.g. height-growth of the white spruce trees, nitrogen content of the white spruce foliage) the term features is used.

4. Theoretical considerations

Investigations of the ecology of vegetation can be divided into three stages (ELLENBERG 1954):

- (1) Description;
- (2) Organization (ordination and classification);
- (3) Interpretation.

4.1 Description

A sample consists of a small portion separated from some large population, about which certain information is sought. The problem is to gather adequate

¹ 116 cm = 46 inches, 56,8 cm = 22,6 inches