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PREFACE

Alpine communities have drawn the close attention of many plant ecologists in recent decades. These scenic and comparatively undisturbed habitats can serve as a convenient object for long-term ecological research. Unfortunately, there have been few detailed investigations of structure and processes in alpine communities, especially in the Caucasus.

Therefore, a long-term ecological research field station was founded by a group of scientists from Moscow State University in the alpine zone of Teberda State Reserve in 1977. The station was established to study the composition, structure and dynamics of typical alpine ecosystems of humid mountains in the Northwestern Caucasus. The other goal was to study mechanisms of species coexistence and to test fitness of some recent ecological ideas in field experiments.

The present volume contains some recent experimental data both on population ecology of alpine plants and phytosociology of alpine communities. The first five chapters consider the results of comparative study of several alpine communities. The other three describe experiments in particular phytocoenoses.

The authors wish to continue their research in the future. Any critical comments would be greatly appreciated.

We express our sincere gratitude to our teachers, Professors Tikhon A. Rabotnov, Leonora A. Grishina and Vadim N. Pavlov for their constant attention and support of our work. Thanks are also due to all members of the Moscow University expedition for their help in gathering field materials, and to the administration and staff of Teberda State Reserve for their continual assistance in the organization of field research. We wish to thank Mrs. Allison Smith for her helpful comments on the earlier draft of this volume. We are particularly thankful to Prof. Elias Landolt, who invited us to undertake this book. We would like to thank Mrs. Susy Dreyer for all her efforts in preparing this volume.

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