

Foreword

Mires and bogs are essential elements of landscape and the natural environment worldwide, supporting unique ecosystems and being of utmost importance in preservation of biodiversity. Mires and bogs are composed mainly of peat that strongly supports and influences bog and wetland ecosystems, and peat monoliths can serve as archives indicating conditions in past environments. Significant amounts of organic carbon are stored in the form of peat; thus, peat reserves play a major role in the carbon biogeochemical cycling and are of especial significance considering the ongoing process of climate change. Industrial and agricultural use of peat is growing, and significant amounts of peat are mined industrially not only in Northern countries, but also worldwide. However, peat mining is not always performed wisely, largely due to lack of understanding of the role and importance of peat in natural ecosystems and its prospects of industrial use. Bearing it in mind, there is an increasing interest in the study of the properties of mires and peat and the processes influencing their formation. Notwithstanding the significant resources of peat in Northern Europe and the abundance of mires, too little has been done to gain new insights in the functioning of natural ecosystems and the functions and sustainable usage of peat.

The aim of this collection of articles is to sum up the existing research on peat and mires in Latvia and Poland and identify major prospective directions of research on these topics in future.

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