

Literature

Johnson, C. 1993: Provisional atlas of the Cryptophagidae–Atomariinae (Coleoptera) of Britain and Ireland. — Dixon Printing Co. Ltd, 91 pp. ISBN 1-870393-17-1. Price GBP 5.50.

The present atlas is published by the Biological Records Centre, which is operated by the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, an organisation financed by the United Kingdom Government. The Biological Records Centre is a co-ordinator in the study of the occurrence of plants and animals in the British Isles. One activity of the centre is to produce provisional atlases of British flora and fauna. Besides the present atlas, other works on insects include thus far the click beetles, the fleas, the ants, the social wasps, the larger Brachycera (Diptera), the long-palped craneflies and the Sepsidae (Diptera).

The atlas here reviewed, deals with the diverse, non-conspicuous beetle-subfamily Atomariinae. These insects are small (length less than 3 mm) beetles which live a hidden life, generally in different kinds of decaying substances. They probably feed on fungal hyphae and moulds. The identification of Atomariinae is difficult. The present atlas is based on specimens practically all of which have been examined personally by its author. The atlas contains 52 separate maps, of which 48 are species-maps, while one map presents overall record-coverage, and two additional maps deal with number of records from each 10 km square. Finally, the map-section of the atlas ends with a vice-county map. The text part of the atlas is quite brief, but however clearly covers all that seems necessary. It starts with an introduction on the taxonomy of the family Cryptophagidae in which the subfamily Atomariinae is distinguished. Following the introduction are comments on identification and available keys. The habitat preferences and the collecting of Atomariinae is discussed on a page preceding a checklist of the subfamily in the British Isles. The distribution maps summarise the occurrence, taking into consideration the time-aspect (records

pre-1960 and 1960 onwards). The separate species maps are accompanied by information on the known living habits together with comments on distribution abroad. The map section is followed by the distributional records in text-format, arranged by country and vice-county. The atlas ends with two appendices (vice-county symbols; collector abbreviations), a bibliography and a species index.

There is hardly anything negative to be said of the present work. One can only admire the author, Dr. Colin Johnson, of the Manchester museum, whose work on this difficult insect group has made it one of the best known beetle-groups in the British Isles. The author is well known in Finland, because he has on several occasions verified determinations of Finnish specimens. Moreover, he has determined much material from Finland, e.g. most of the material in the Zoological museum in Helsinki. His determinations have proved to be correct up to 100%. This means that the reliability of the maps in the present atlas is high, which is of utmost importance for the presumed users, among whom I count amateurs and professional entomologists as well as persons working in the field of nature conservation.

Finally, on the basis of the present atlas, one can note distinct differences between the collecting activity of different regions. Thus Scotland and particularly the centre of Ireland are "white areas" in comparison with most parts of England. Much more work is thus still needed before our picture of the distribution of many different animal groups can be regarded as satisfactory. The moderate price of this atlas will certainly be appreciated by all coleopterologists both in the British Isles and abroad.

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