

Literature

Desender, K., Dufrene, M., Loreau, M., Luff, M.L. & Maelfait, J.-P. (eds.) 1994: Carabid Beetles: Ecology and Evolution. Series Entomologica 51. Kluwer Academic Publishers. — Dordrecht, 474 pp., ISBN 0-7923-2464-1, price DFL 435,- USD 257,- GBP 174,-.

Generally speaking, among the order Coleoptera or even the arthropod class Insecta, the carabids (the ground-beetles) form one of the best-known taxonomic groups, regardless of the discipline of biology with which one compares them. The taxonomy and systematics of the family and also the ecology and physiology have been quite intensively studied for many decades, and the studies cover large parts of the earth. Once the taxonomy and systematics of an insect group is comparatively well settled, biologists other than biosystematists have great opportunities to test their hypotheses. The intense work focused on carabids today is of course to be regarded as positive. There are, however, many insect groups which even today are practically unknown. Studies on insufficiently known groups are thus also to be supported.

The book under review is a compilation of papers presented at the 8th European Carabidologists' Meeting — the 2nd International Symposium of Carabidology held in Belgium, in September 1992. The numbers of contributions and of contributors are impressive: In all, 96 authors and 71 papers are listed. The papers are divided into four sections as follows: Section one deals with biogeography and evolutionary ecology and comprises 13 separate contributions; section two deals with life histories and population ecology (21 papers); section three focuses on problems of community ecology and conservation (27 papers), and finally the fourth section treats the ground-beetles in agriculture and forestry (10 papers). The book starts with a short introduction on the subject.

In general, one can only admire the editors responsible for the publication of this book. On the whole the quality of the volume is good and most of the contents seem to be sound from the scientific point of view (referees were used). Some comments may, however, be made.

First, one finds the name of the book somewhat misleading; when I initially read the title, I had the impression that the book aimed to gather together all available knowledge on the ecology and the evolution of the carabids. To my surprise, the book turned out to be a symposium-volume presenting separate contributions in a variety of fields. I think the editors should have mentioned the symposium-status earlier, even on the front cover.

Moreover, editorial uniformity is a must in this kind of book. It is surprising that the editors allow differences in the lay-out of tables; italics for the scientific names are inconsistently used throughout the volume. Other minor mistakes include, for instance, illustrations lacking symbols for different taxa (p. 13) or illustrations which, considering their inadequate symbols should have been redrawn (p. 81). Some illustrations and tables are given too much space (p. 162, 402) while others definitely need further explanation to be informative (p. 210, 216, 249, 250, 358). These deficiencies are, however, to be regarded as marginal — the main impression the volume gives is still positive.

Finally, one comment on this kind of symposium volume, gathering contributions from different biological disciplines but with a certain insect group as the combining factor. Possibly meetings on one certain discipline are to be preferred over meetings based on a certain animal-group but without limitations regarding which discipline is treated. Important contributions may more likely remain hidden in symposium volumes of the latter kind.

One can conclude, however, that, being so diverse in contents, the present volume will be of great interest to scientists working on carabids.

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