

Book reviews

A book mainly on Spanish darkling beetles

Viñolas, A. & Cartagena, M. C. 2003: Revisión del género *Phylan* Stephens, 1857 (Coleoptera: Tenebrionidae: Dendarini). — Entomological Monographs of Argania editio 1: 1–93.

The family Tenebrionidae, or darkling beetles, is one of the large beetle families. It is also known for having a remarkably high proportion of endemics restricted to small geographic areas, a situation undoubtedly caused by the widespread lack of hind wings. Many tenebrionids live in arid areas, and there are, for instance, several large genera that are mainly found in the inner of Asia.

The genus *Phylan*, which is treated in the present paper, is mainly ibero-maghrebian, only two species reach beyond this area. *Phylan gibbus* reaches from Spain all the way to the Baltic, while *Phylan abbreviatus* reaches Italy. The remaining 44 recognized species are found in the Iberian Peninsula (including the Balears) or North Africa.

Viñolas and Cartagena have now prepared a revision of this genus. Strictly speaking, the term revision may be considered inappropriate, since no new species are described, no new synonymizations have been noted, and no new combinations are indicated. Still, bringing together information that has been published in a large number of publications that may occasionally be difficult to obtain results in a useful review, and the keys together with relevant illustrations will undoubtedly be of great help to those studying this genus.

Many of the species have been divided into subspecies. Looking at the distribution maps it would seem that occasionally two or even more subspecies inhabit the same area; this is particularly prominent in *Phylan ulyssyponensis*. Such an occurrence is contrary to what is generally understood for subspecies. Possibly they are subspecies with different ecological demands (altitude?), perhaps it is rather a question of infrapopulational polymorphism, or maybe the subspecies should actually be accepted as a distinct species. This is obviously a place for future study.

The authors give distribution maps of the species and subspecies, quite a welcome thing to do in a genus where many species have quite a restricted distribution. For *Phylan gibbus*, the map shows only part of the actual distribution, reaching Norway but leaving out all those Baltic coastal areas from which this species is also known.

Unfortunately, the title of this revision includes an obvious error. In the work itself the genus is credited to Stephens, 1832, a year when Stephens gave the description; thus, the year 1857 in the title must be a simple typing error. Another matter, then, is that the genus name was actually validly introduced already by Dejean in 1821.

Since most of the species are found in the western Mediterranean, this book will not be much used by those who study the northern or central European fauna. But for those who include Spain or North Africa in their field of interest it can be a welcome addition. Noticing how many species there are with a highly limited distribution, we can expect that there still remain undescribed species to discover, too.

Hans Silfverberg

A welcome book for European Oedemerid researchers

Vázquez, X. A. 2002: European Fauna of Oedemeridae. Argana editio, Barcelona, 179 pp.

The heteromerous beetles have been in a constant systematic flux during several decades. Families have been divided or united, genera have been transferred from one family to another, and family names have been changed in accordance with the rules of nomenclature. However, the family Oedemeridae is one of the few exceptions to this tendency. Obviously it forms a sufficiently well defined and outstanding group, so that nobody has seen any reason to change the accustomed use.

Within the family systematic work has continued. Even the fairly well known European species have occasionally been subjected to change, and new species have been described from Europe quite recently. Therefore, we can welcome the new book by Xavier Vázquez, in which the European species are presented. The book includes keys for determination, a description of each species, notes on natural history and distribution, and colour plates showing all the species. The genitalia have not been discussed, nor illustrated, except for just a few species.

When a book presents the European fauna, the question will rise how 'Europe' is delimited. In this case most of the European Russia is included, but not the parts close to Caucasus or the Cas-

pian. The Greek islands in the Aegean are included.

As in most families in Europe, the number of species increases from north to south. In the Mediterranean region there are also several small-area endemics, both such that live on some islands and such that live in mountaineous areas. There are no arctic or boreal species in the family, and only a few transpalaeartic ones.

Revisions of genera and species often result in changes of names. That has also happened in Oedemeridae, and Vázquez lists several such cases, where previously used names have been invalidated, in some cases because of homonymy, in other cases being junior synonyms. Only a few of these changes affect the North European fauna. The change of *Chrysanthia nigricornis* to *Chrysanthia geniculata* has already been noticed for some years, a more recent one is when *Oedemera subulata* was changed to *Oedemera pthysica*.

Vázquez's book will undoubtedly be a welcome contribution to all who work with South European Oedemeridae. For the fauna of northern Europe it does not give much that was not already included in hitherto used works (colour plates as an exception), but whenever somebody wishes to widen the perspective, the book offers help. The lack of a discussion on genitalia can be seen as a weakness, still as a whole we get here a useful overview of the family.

Hans Silfverberg