

Book review

The Shieldbugs of Sweden

Coulianos, C.-C. 2012: *Bärfisar i Sverige – en fälthandbok*. [The Shieldbugs of Sweden – A field guide.] — Entomologiska föreningen i Stockholm. Stockholm. ISBN 978-91-978881-1-0, 128 pp. Prices, not including shipping: 1–5 books: 60 SEK (~7.1 €) each, 6 books or more: 40 SEK (~4.7 €) each. The book can be ordered from Stockholms Entomologiska Förening, PO Box 50007, 104 05 Stockholm, Sweden, addressee Bert Gustafsson (bert.gustafsson@nrm.se).

The Swedes have a long tradition in making good and inspiring keys and field guides for different insect groups. “Bärfisar i Sverige” is no exception, and it is the third field guide in a series published by the Entomological Society of Stockholm and The Swedish Museum of Natural History. The two former books were “Trollsländor i Sverige” [The Dragonflies of Sweden] and “Gräshoppor i Sverige” [The Grasshoppers of Sweden]. “Bärfisar i Sverige” covers all the large, true bugs (Hemiptera–Heteroptera) within the superfamily Pentatomoidea in Sweden, i.e. the families Pentatomidae, Acanthosomatidae, Cydnidae, Thyreocoridae and Scutelleridae.

The Swedish common name “Bärfis” used in the title of this book is equivalent to the English common name “stinkbugs” and refers to the smelly secrete these insects can release from the two scent glands on the bug’s thorax if disturbed or frightened. Maybe a more positive name could have been used for these beautiful animals? For this is a very beautiful book! It is well illustrated with a lot of pretty and descriptive color photos, mostly “live” field-pictures, but also habitus color plates and pictures of more detailed characters. The photos are mainly of adult individuals, but it is also very commendable that more than half of the species treated also have photos of juveniles. Altogether, 28 photographers are credited.

The text is descriptive, accurate and interest-

ing, and written by the nestor among the Northern hemipterologists, Carl-Cedric Coulianos. The book starts by describing the different family characters and then presents small chapters on morphology, life cycles, nutrition, natural enemies, collecting techniques, advice on how to identify species, and a call to report records. Some of the faunal changes (including threatened, red-listed species) in Sweden are also commented on. Color plates of all species in 2.5 times magnitude are presented collectively, followed by a well-illustrated dichotomous key to all species.

The main part of the book consists of descriptions of all the 53 Swedish species in systematic order, including the species with few or occasional records in Sweden, for example *Pinthaeus sanguinipes*, which has been found only in one occasion in Sweden. For some of the families (Acanthosomatidae, Cydnidae and Scutelleridae), and certain genera in the family of Pentatomidae (*Sciocoris* and *Aelia*), special overviews are given.

Besides the illustrations and the informative text on each species, a small map showing the known distribution in Sweden is given along with a habitus photo in natural size. The texts consist of descriptions of morphology, similar species, distribution in Sweden, “way of life” (habitat/host plant) and life cycle. All in all, this is more than a field guide!

The book is primarily intended for the Swedish public. In spite of this, the relevance of this book reaches all the Nordic countries and anyone that can read Swedish. This is not least because no equivalent field guide exists in the north, except a few from the British Isles, but these are less relevant for the Nordic countries. Some small adaptations in this book would have facilitated the use outside Sweden. In general, the use of scientific names could have been increased, both for the shieldbugs, and – not the least – for the many host plants mentioned in the text. One could for instance easily have made a list at the end of the book with the Swedish common names and its

scientific counterpart. The Swedish common names can be looked up in the Dyntaxa database (www.dyntaxa.se).

Sweden is the Nordic country with the highest species number of shieldbugs. With an addition of six species, the book would have covered all the Nordic countries, i.e. *Sciocoris macrocephalus*, *Eysarcoris fabricii*, *Eurygaster austriaca* (in Denmark) and *Ochetostethus opacus* (in Norway and Finland), and *Eysarcoris aeneus* and *Dybowskyia reticulata* (in Finland).

There are some minor errors in the book, like the misspelling of Pentatomoidea on page 6, some minor errors in author citations and an “untidy” reference list. However, to our knowledge, there are no major flaws or weaknesses in this book.

To summarize, this is a beautiful, well com-

posed, interesting and not the least, inexpensive book, which can be recommended to nature enthusiasts at all ages, whether you collect or take photos, are a specialist or an amateur on Heteroptera. The book will also help and inspire those already working with the group, and hopefully open up a new world to many others, so that the knowledge of these interesting insects can increase within the Nordic countries.

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