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BOOK REVIEW

ASHE P., O'CONNOR J.P. & MURRAY D.A.: A CHECKLIST OF IRISH AQUATIC INSECTS. *Occasional Publication of the Irish Biogeographical Society* 3. Irish Biogeographical Society, Dublin, 1998, vi + 80 pp. ISBN 0-9511514-2-8. Price GBP 6.00.

Although the Irish aquatic insect fauna has been studied for over 150 years, the information is scattered throughout numerous publications and this is the first checklist of the entire Irish aquatic insect fauna. The authors presented this publication at the XXVIIth Congress of the International Association of Limnology held in Dublin in August 1998 and the publication had been funded by the authors.

Twelve orders are treated, including chiefly terrestrial ones such as Collembola, Neuroptera, Lepidoptera and Hymenoptera. The respective chapters concerning individual orders, or families in the case of the Diptera, are introduced with respect to previous regional lists, key references and comparison of Irish species lists with British records. Subordinal classification is presented only in the case of the Odonata but missing in highly diverse orders Diptera and Coleoptera. The lists are arranged in taxonomical order for families and in alphabetical order for genera and species drawing upon both published and unpublished data. Where relevant brief notes are included noting inter alia rare species and key references.

Altogether 1,499 species are now recorded from Ireland. Taking into account the generally reduced diversity of islands in

comparison with nearby mainlands, the Irish insect fauna is surprisingly rich and many freshwater groups are better represented here than terrestrial ones. For instance, aquatic insects represent 73% of the equivalent section of Britain's fauna, contrary to 55% in the terrestrial insect groups studied. However, only 26 species occur in Ireland which have not been found in Britain. Naturally, the highest diversity is exhibited by the Diptera (929 species), Coleoptera (248 species), and Trichoptera (147 species). I found the treatment of the former order particularly stimulating. The authors list species of all families including 578 species of the family Chironomidae, an extremely difficult group from the taxonomical point of view. Moreover, there are problems in trying to calculate the exact number of terrestrial, ripicolous and true aquatic species.

This handy booklet is concise, technically perfect, and all the chapters are extensively referenced; references are grouped in respective chapters (orders, families in the case of the Diptera). Except for application of some old names (e.g. in the chapter dealing with the Ephemeroptera), the list follows contemporary nomenclature respecting most of substantial recent changes. The checklist of Irish aquatic insects will be of particular importance to anyone interested in entomology, limnology, biodiversity or biogeography. One wishes to have similar checklists dealing with these groups of insects compiled for other countries.

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