

BOOK REVIEW

WACHMANN E., MELBER A. & DECKERT J.: *Cimicomorpha: Microphysidae (Flechtenwanzen), Miridae (Weichwanzen). Neubearbeitung der Wanzen Deutschlands, Österreichs und der deutschsprachigen Schweiz. DIE TIERWELT DEUTSCHLANDS. WANZEN. BAND 2* [in German]. Goecke & Evers, Keltern, 2004, 288 pp., 266 colour photographs, ISBN 3-931374-57-2, hardback, EUR 49,00.

This new major work on central European Heteroptera published in the renowned series *Die Tierwelt Deutschlands* is scheduled to include altogether 7 parts: three special volumes on life history, one general volume (on morphology, phylogeny and ecology) and three more special volumes on taxonomy and identification. Volume 1 is already complete, but, for technical reasons, will not be published until spring 2005. It will cover the Dipsocoromorpha, Nepomorpha, Gerromorpha, Leptopodomorpha and those Cimicomorpha not treated in volume 2 (Tingidae, Anthocoridae, Cimicidae and Reduviidae). Volume 3 is in preparation; it will cover the more attractive Pentatomorpha (including the Aradoidea, Lygaeoidea, Pyrrhocoroidea, Coreoidea and Pentatomoidea). The whole work will include about 1000 species known from Germany, Austria and the German-speaking part of Switzerland.

Apparently the first three volumes are not, or only secondarily, addressed to pure taxonomists, but to ecologists, applied researchers and amateurs, who are looking for concise information on life history and host plant relations, who need visual confirmation for the tedious and partially outdated dichotomous keys, or who simply want to enjoy excellent photographs of these cryptic creatures.

Volume 2 covers altogether about 377 species of lichen and plant bugs (Microphysidae and Miridae). The latter group is noteworthy for being difficult to identify and for its complicated taxonomy, and has not been comprehensively reviewed for central Europe since Wagner (1952). After a short introductory paragraph on each family, subfamily, tribe and genus, there are short monographic paragraphs on each species ranging from a quarter to half a page in length. These monographs give information on general and central European distribution, abundance, habitat and host plants, food, and phenology. The book concludes with photograph credits (with specifications of localities and dates), references and an index.

The pin-sharp high gloss colour photographs are definitely a highlight of the book. The size of most of them is half a page,

and most were taken by Ekkehard Wachmann, who is also one of the most renowned insect photographers of Germany. Altogether, about 60 % of the species are shown, in some cases both sexes, nymphs or colour morphs, and a number of rare species poorly known even by many specialists. The mirid bug photographs are particularly valuable, since they potentially increase the interest in this often-neglected group. Beginners have long been deterred by their complicated taxonomy and the fact that the latest central European key is more than 50 years old.

The text on the life histories summarises a wealth of information, which is otherwise widely scattered or unpublished. Unfortunately, no references are given at the species level; so in most cases it is not clear if information came from the authors or from other sources. To the pure taxonomist, the text may seem a bit naked, since no synonyms, no morphological descriptions and no identification keys are given. Instead, the authors refer to the Palearctic catalogue of Heteroptera by Aukema & Rieger (1995 ff.) and the forthcoming volumes on identification. Thus the present book must be seen within the broader context of the whole series. Even without any keys or descriptions, however, its splendid photographs can certainly be used for the identification of many species, or at least for confirming identification based on other keys.

It may be a bit irritating that the work starts with volume 2, right into medias res, without any introductory or general chapters, which are scheduled only for volume 4. However, this criticism will fade away when all the volumes are published. The question whether the identification or life history parts of the series should have been written earlier, is difficult to answer. Definitely, the chosen sequence of publishing will raise more interest in this fascinating insect group, just by laying emphasis on the esthetic aspect and by leaving the complicated taxonomy to be treated in later volumes.

It needs no stressing that this series will become a major work of reference for heteropterologists all over Europe and that it will set a new standard for future insect monographs. Volume 2, in particular, is a very valuable book filling a considerable gap. It is full of otherwise widely scattered information on a little-known insect group, with highly attractive photographs and at a reasonable price (despite lack of funding for the printing costs). It is a pity that the German text will exclude many potential readers from neighbouring countries, but the photographs alone make this book worth buying.

H. Nickel