

## BOOK REVIEW

LÖBL I. & SMETANA A. (eds): CATALOGUE OF PALAE-ARCTIC COLEOPTERA. VOL. 3, SCARABAEOIDEA, SCIRTOIDEA, DASCILLOIDEA, BUPRESTOIDEA, BYRRHOIDEA, 2006, 690 pp., ISBN 87-88757-59-5; VOL. 4, ELATEROIDEA, DERODONTOIDEA, BOSTRICHOIDEA, LYMEXYLOIDEA, CLEROIDEA, CUCUJOIDEA, 2007, 935 pp., ISBN 87-88757-67-6; VOL. 5, TENEBRIONOIDEA, 2008, 670 pp., ISBN 978-87-88757-69-9; Apollo Books, Stenstrup. ISBN 87-88757-71-4 or 978-87-88757-71-2 (Vols 1–8) (hardbacks).

The Creator's inordinate fondness for beetles provides a lot of work for the many scientists interested in discovering and describing beetle species. Even an apparently simple job, like listing the names of species and their geographic distributions, involves a huge amount of work. Less than 30% of the global beetle diversity is known, depending on the estimates adopted. At the current rate of progress it could take 200 years to describe all the species, providing they are extant. The main problem is with the rich tropical beetle fauna, while that of the Palearctic region, mostly temperate and where there is a high concentration of insect taxonomists, is well documented.

Nevertheless, a simple list of beetle species names, the catalogue, for the entire Palearctic region, i.e. Europe, North Africa and a greater part of Asia, will result in 8 thick hardback volumes. The beetle taxa are being published in classical taxonomic order, with the Archostemata, Myxophaga and Adephaga in the first volume published in 2003, and Hydrophiloidea, Histeroidea, and Staphylinoidea in the second volume published in 2004. This review is of the following three volumes, which include the Scarabaeoidea, Scirtoidea, Dascilloidea, Buprestoidea and Byrrhoidea (Vol. 3, 2006); Elateroidea, Derodontoidea, Bostrichoidea, Lymexyloidea, Cleroidea and Cucujoidea (Vol. 4, 2007) and Tenebrionoidea (Vol. 5, 2008). Each volume consists of 600–900 pages and costs 100–150 Euro.

Plus the three volumes, which are still in preparation, the work will cover about 100,000 species of Coleoptera occurring in the Palearctic region. For each species there is a complete synonymy, which substantially increases the length of the text, especially for morphologically polymorphic common species

with a wide geographical range. For example, the two spot ladybird, *Adalia bipunctata*, has 96 synonyms, which take up one and a half printed pages. About one third of each book consists of references to the literature, including primary descriptions, a source not easily accessible elsewhere. Nomenclatorial stability will hopefully increase thanks to this work.

The heading of each page is the appropriate family-group name, which makes searching the book easier. There are indexes to family-group names and genus-group names at the end of each volume. Even if a species epiteton is known one can only find a species by slavishly browsing through the long text. This is the most conspicuous disadvantage of a printed book compared to an electronic database, which eventually I expect will be added to the printed book.

Geographical range of each species is provided in the form of a list of abbreviations of countries or provinces of large countries (Russia, China). Detailed distributions of narrow endemics are given. Introduced species are sometimes indicated (such as the invasive ladybird *Harmonia axyridis*), or not (such as the ladybird *Rodolia cardinalis*, introduced a long time ago), or missing, because of the dynamic character of both introductions and invasions. The lists of native species seem to be more complete than in the Fauna Europaea. Again, the task of selecting species of a particular family living in a selected country, simple using an electronic database, is a long boring job using a printed book.

Catalogues of individual families, subfamilies or tribes were contributed by recognised taxonomic specialists, not only from the Palearctic, but from various parts of the world. Whereas many authors are from the Czech Republic, on the other hand, China is very underrepresented.

I have found no errors, either factual or typesetting. However, specialists may find some mistakes and are invited to inform the editors, who will publish errata and the names of the reviewers in the following volumes. This very precise and scientifically informative book should be available in every department studying beetle taxonomy, although I would prefer to have it on a DVD than on my bookshelf.

*O. Nedvěd*