

BOOK REVIEW

YANG D. & LIU X.-Y.: MEGALOPTERA. FAUNA SINICA, INSECTA Vol. 51. Science Press, Beijing, 2010, viii + 457 pp. + xiv tabs. ISBN 978-7-03-027159-4. Price GBP 45.00. [In Chinese, with English summary.]

Right from the first glance at the monograph MEGALOPTERA OF CHINA by Yang Ding and Liu Xingyue, with the formal title "Fauna Sinica, Insecta Vol. 51, Megaloptera", it is evident that this book offers much more than one would expect from the title. It is not only the eye catching coloured photographs but also the images of ultrastructural characters and numerous (33) distribution maps that invite one to become more interested in Megaloptera. Most of the 143 figures contain several magnificent drawings of morphological details, e.g. of wings, heads and genital segments, the latter especially are well worth close study.

At the second glance, if the reader is non-Chinese, one regrets not being able to read the Chinese text, as it provides the historical background and an introduction to classification, morphology, biogeography and biology of this formerly rather neglected group. So far, 106 species belonging to 13 genera have been found in China which are described or redescribed. Compared with approximately 330 species worldwide the Chinese Megalopteran fauna is very representative.

At the third glance it should be emphasized that the so called English summary is much more than just a summary: It makes this book available to the non Chinese speaking scientific community. It includes (1) keys to the species and (2) diagnoses of the order, families, subfamilies and genera. It also includes (3) a list of the characters used in the phylogenetic analysis. This means that the cladograms are transparent and not just made up

of black boxes. In addition to an alphabetical list of the extant species another of the fossil taxa is also provided.

The competence of the authors, both from the China Agricultural University, also reflects the previous project of Prof. Yang ("Taxonomy and phylogeny of the Chinese Megaloptera", funded by the National Science Foundation of China), and the post doctoral project of Dr. Liu ("Molecular phylogeny of Megaloptera: Evolutionary patterns of their genital structure, coloration, and sexual dimorphism", funded by the Japanese Society for Promotion of Science).

It should once more be emphasized, that the excellent drawings of the genital sclerites of all the species, which are based on well dissected material, are of enormous instructive and deductive value. The genital sclerites of Megaloptera, especially those of the Corydalidae, have for the long time either been ignored or represented by oversimplified drawings (without dissection and/or maceration). The present depictions provide a basis for a worldwide comparison of these phylogenetically relevant sclerites. In addition it is an essential precondition for the homologization of the genital sclerites of the Neuropterida, as up to now accurate and detailed drawings of genital sclerites are predominantly only available mainly for the Raphidioptera and Neuroptera.

Summing up, the scientific value of this book on the Megaloptera of China cannot be overestimated. It is the first modern and most comprehensive study on the Megaloptera of China. It combines long-term classical experience with a modern approach. It is an exemplary contribution to the knowledge of this insect order as not only has it local and Asian relevance but also a global relevance.

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