

## BOOK REVIEW

STOCKMANN R. & YTHIER E. 2010: SCORPIONS OF THE WORLD. N.A.P. Editions, Verrières-le-Buisson, 565 pp. ISBN 978-2913688117. Price GBP 68.00.

Scorpions are arachnids important to people because their sting is painful and in few cases can be lethal for humans. Due to their large size and attractive appearance they have many admirers. Even though they have fascinated thousands of people around the globe and professional and amateur scientists, we still have little knowledge about their biology. Despite the increasing number of DNA analyses and new species described each year we still do not fully understand their diversity and distribution. *Scorpions of the World* gives a synoptic view of our current knowledge of these archaic animals and is for everyone a wonderful introduction to these remarkable animals. Its authors (R. Stockmann and E. Ythier) follow in the long tradition of the French of investigating scorpions and present us with a readable overview of scorpion biology based on the most recently published information. In addition, the authors also share with us their personal experiences of keeping and identifying scorpions. The book consists of two parts. In the first part the authors introduce scorpions and give an overview of their morphological traits and biology. It accurately describes the basic characteristics of the order, provides information on their paleontology, taxonomical criteria, anatomy, principal biological functions and ecology, and includes valuable information on how to keep scorpions in captivity. In the taxonomical section there is a very helpful guide for beginners. The plentiful pictures of specific features provide a well illustrated means of determining the species of scorpion. The important sections on scorpion venom, blood and radio-resistance were written by Max Goyffon and provide detailed information on these interesting aspects. This part of the book ends with an account of the myths, legends, and scorpions in art, which nicely illustrates how important and interesting this group of invertebrates has

always been for humans. The second part of the book includes a field guide, which consists of photographs, descriptions and distribution maps of more than 350 species, subspecies or morphs of scorpion. This part provides a practical field guide and its division into seven main geographic zones makes it easy to use. Moreover, the identification key enables the determination of the main groups of scorpions down to the generic level. Unfortunately this key is rather superficial when it comes to the most widespread and diversified family, the Buthidae. In addition, the authors compare various classifications, which could confuse amateur naturalists. On the other hand, the authors refer to other important identification keys, which may help beginners. The book ends with a complete list of the species described and their distributions and a survey of important publications on their diversity and other sources of information. The authors themselves state that "this guide is not a book for specialist arachnologist" as there are already detailed books on scorpions (e.g. Polis, 1990; Fet et al., 2000; Kovařík, 2009). However, this book is an ideal guide for all arachnologists beginning to study this order and all field scientists. In conclusion, this book is successful in providing an insight into the complex biology and diversity of scorpions and every scorpion devotee should include it in his/her private library.

## REFERENCES

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