



GANDY M. 2016: *MOTH*. Reaktion Books, London, 240 pp., 120 illustrations, 103 in colour. ISBN 978-1-78023-585-1 (pbk). Price GBP 12.95.

DODD A. 2016: *BEETLE*. Reaktion Books, London, 192 pp., 102 illustrations, 80 in colour. ISBN 978-1-78023-488-5 (pbk). Price GBP 12.95.

Both titles are recent additions to the Reaktion Animal Series, which weaves together aspects of science with the cultural history of mankind. The earlier volumes in the series dealing with invertebrate subjects were on the bee, cockroach, fly, mosquito, scorpion and spider. The reviewed volumes are on representatives of the two most prolific insect orders on Earth, which comprise over 350,000 species of beetles and close to 200,000 species of moths and butterflies. No wonder they are the most popular groups among laymen insect collectors and professional entomologists. In recent years there has been a renewed surge of interest in these spectacular insects facilitated by advances in digital photography, the Web-based dissemination of scientific expertise and new cartographic projects that enable direct collaboration between amateur experts and scientists. The Animal series of Reaktion Books offers a novel approach to exploring the historical significance of various animals and contemporary endeavour to understand their scientific and cultural values.

Matthew Gandy's book focuses on the moth: long associated with darkness and the gothic imagination, yet significant in a

myriad of other ways, from silk production to sensitive indicators of environmental change. Matthew writes: "The rich history of vernacular names speaks to the significant place of moths in early cultures of nature: names such as the *Merveille du Jour*, the *Green-brindled Crescent* and the *Clifden Nonpareil* evoke a sense of wonder that connects disparate fields such as folklore, the history of place and early scientific texts." The study of moths formed an integral part of early natural history and many thousands of drawings, paintings and physical specimens remain in museum collections.

Adam Dodd explores the world of beetles who sometimes have astounding and bizarre interactions with the world of human beings. From ancient Egyptian deities to German automobiles, beetles have left an indelible mark on human cultures around the world. Inspiring early occult beliefs and religious myths, the beetle also finds its way into art, folklore, literature and science. Dodd uncovers the beetle's ongoing place in the aesthetic appreciation of nature and shows how knowledge of beetle anatomy is assisting the development of cutting-edge cybernetics and blurring the boundary between science and fiction.

Both volumes are extremely well illustrated, bursting with historical detail and engagingly written. These exceptional accounts of the cultural and natural history of beetles and moths will undoubtedly change the way readers think about their relationship with these captivating insects.

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