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BOOK REVIEW

Three recent volumes on insects in the Zoological Catalogue of Australia. The references to individual volumes below (and their sections) are taken verbatim from the Catalogues as the recommended forms of citation.

(1) Cassis G. & Gordon G. 1995: Hemiptera: Heteroptera (Coleorrhyncha to Cimicomorpha). In Houston W.W.K. & Maynard G.V. (eds): Zoological Catalogue of Australia. Vol. 27.3A. CSIRO, Melbourne, XV + 506 pp. Price USD 79.95 + 6.00 for overseas customers; hard cover, illustrated. ISBN 0-643-05704-8 (volume).

(2) Wells A. 1996 (ed.): Zoological Catalogue of Australia. Vol. 26. Psocoptera, Phthiraptera, Thysanoptera. CSIRO, Melbourne, XIII + 418 pp. Price USD 74.95; hard cover, illustrated. ISBN 0-643-05888-5 (volume).

(3) Wells A. 1996 (ed.): Zoological Catalogue of Australia. Vol. 28. Neuroptera, Strepsiptera, Mecoptera, Siphonaptera. CSIRO, Melbourne, XII + 230 pp. Price USD 69.95; hard cover, illustrated. ISBN 0-643-05801-X (volume).

"The *Zoological Catalogue of Australia*, when fully compiled, will consist of a published list of every named animal species known to occur in Australia, including territories and waters under Australian control. Information on each species will include synonymy, reference to primary literature, a brief summary of geographical distribution and ecological attributes, location and status of type material and type locality for each available name, and bibliography on various aspects, especially biology." The succinct characteristics of the series is taken from an AGPS (Australian Government Service) information leaflet and could not be better stated.

This important series of publications has covered many insect orders (Vol. 22, 1994: Protura, Collembola, Diplura; Vol. 25, 1988: Ephemero-

ptera, Megaloptera, Odonata, Plecoptera, Trichoptera; Vol. 4, 1987: Coleoptera Archostemmata, Myxophaga, Adephaga; Vol. 9, 1992: Col. Scarabaeoidea; Vol. 2, 1985: Hymenoptera Formicidae, Sphecoidea, Vespoidea part.; Vol. 10, 1993: Hymenoptera Apoidea) and the present review concerns the three most recent volumes. They are considered together with respect to the advantages and disadvantages of their format, and only then some features of particular volumes (sections) are considered in chronological order.

All the volumes are published in the same format which is explained in the Editorial Preface to each volume. In the introductory section, there is a review of World family and higher classification (often including, as a welcome feature, numbers of established genera and species for both Australian and extralimital taxa), a discussion and historical review of family and higher classification, an overview of taxonomic revisions and activities in factual and historical contexts, a brief review of the Australian fauna (composition, origins, distribution), general biological notes, more detailed explanations of the format than provided in the preface, and bibliography of general works. This is followed by treatment of individual families and subordinate taxa (with an introductory part, a representative whole insect illustration, and a separate bibliography). Each of the volumes has several appendices (lists of abbreviations, museum acronyms, new taxonomic decisions made in the work, and others suited to the group covered, e.g., host lists) and a comprehensive taxonomic index.

So far so good, everything is explained and seems comprehensible and sensible. However, a bureaucratic touch and mechanistic application of computer power are noticeable. For instance, lists of biological terms are clearly incomplete, sometimes unsuitable and controversial. Groupings of references (except those concerning the original descriptions) are too complicated and too long, making the lists of secondary references difficult to survey. This is caused mainly by an enforced regulation to quote all the references (in the main parts of the catalogues) in full. For instance, any reference to *Syst. Nat. 10* by Linnaeus (at least 5 printed lines in length) is regularly repeated in its full form. Another example, a full reference to the recent generic and higher level catalogue of the nepomorphan bugs by Štys & Jansson is repeated, often several times, under every supraspecific taxon of aquatic bugs. This is not mere personal and subjective complaint; the same objection has been raised by every Australian zoologist with whom I have discussed the issue. Another adverse feature is that all the taxa are treated alphabetically, e.g., even the Heteroptera where families have well-established suprafamilial classification. Lesser consistence and more common sense would greatly enhance the ease of use of this, otherwise excellently conceived work.

The volume 27.3A on the Heteroptera (Cassis & Gross, first part) covers the Coleorrhyncha and the heteropteran infraorders Enicocephalomorpha, Dipsocoromorpha, Gerromorpha, Nepomorpha, Leptopodomorpha, and Cimicomorpha; altogether 32 familes, 352 genera and 909 species (undoubtedly only a small fraction of the extant diversity at species level). The treatment is, with the above raised general objections, perfect.

The same is true for the other volumes recently published; I shall include only some interesting comprehensive accounts.

Vol. 26 contains sections on Psocoptera [Smithers C.N., pp. 1–79, 333–335 (Appendices I–II), 363–372 (Index)], Phthiraptera [Palma R.L. & Barker S.C., pp. 81–247, 333–361 (Appendices I–IV), 373–396 (Index)], and Thysanoptera [Mound L.A., pp. 249–332, 333–337 (Appendices I–III), 397–414 (Index)]. The Australian fauna of Psocoptera includes somewhat less than 300 species in 27 families, that of the Phthiraptera 14 families and less than 500 spp., and that of the Thysanoptera 4 families and about 450 species.

Vol. 27 contains sections on Neuroptera [New T.R., pp. 1–104, 184 (Appendix III), 199–216 (Index)], Strepsiptera [New T.R., pp. 105–122, 217–219 (Index)], Mecoptera [Lambkin K.J., pp. 123–135, 184 (Index)], and Siphonaptera [Calder A.A., pp. 137–181, 185–197 (Appendix IV), 222–226 (Index)]. The Australian Neuroptera include 14 families and over 600 species, Strepsiptera 6 families and less than 200 species, Mecoptera 5 families and 30 species, and Siphonaptera 9 families and about 80 spp.

As expected, the quality and depth of treatment of the general parts varies among individual authors, and from group to group. Nevertheless, disregarding the formal objections raised above, the Australian Catalogues are of a high quality, and are indispensable to all taxonomically-minded entomologists interested in the rich, highly endemic, insufficiently explored, and fascinating fauna of this continent.

P. Štys