

## BOOK REVIEW

HANSEN M. 1998: HYDRAENIDAE (COLEOPTERA). World Catalogue of Insects. Vol. 1. Apollo Books, Stenstrup, 169 pp. ISBN 87-88757-27-7. Price DKK 290.00.

The publisher's preface to this new series of world catalogues of insects highlights a problem: We are living in the age of insects as well as in a time of growing biodiversity awareness, but have only a vague idea of the number of insect species described so far. Most relevant world catalogues are 50–100 years old and therefore very out of date as the number of species has usually multiplied since their publication, with thousands of new taxa added annually. Moreover, the views on the phylogeny and systematics of many groups have changed significantly. Such a series is therefore most enthusiastically welcomed.

The series – according to the publishers' intentions – should grow at the pace of one to several volumes per year. Each volume will present at least a brief, general introductory chapter, and list all standard nomenclatorial information on the taxon treated, including type locality and distribution data. Other fields, such as location and status of types, biology, or bibliography, are optional.

This, the first volume, written by a leading specialist on Hydrophiloidea and other "staphyliniform" groups, Michael Hansen of the Copenhagen Zoological Museum, is dedicated to the family Hydraenidae. Although the family is by far not the largest of the "Staphyliniformia", it must have been a time-consuming task to collect and verify information on the 1,163 species, scattered in more than 1,000 papers. Apart from the "obligatory" sources, i.e., old catalogues and Zoological Record (through Vol. 133), information was also extracted directly from papers and other unpublished sources. Even species described only a few months before the publication date of the catalogue are included. However, at least two Iberian species – *Hydraena (Hydraena) marcosae* Aguilera, Hernando & Ribera, 1997 and *Ochthebius ferroi* Fresneda, Lagar & Hernando, 1993 – are not included (both species are missing in the volumes of Zoological Record covered by this catalogue). Thus users should be aware of the existence of "overlooked" species, which still await "discovery" by Zoological Record.

The optional information on each species (see above) includes the references to lecto- or neotype designations, the first use of all different generic combinations, and distributional data. A complete index of all names mentioned is included. The book is not just a catalogue as it also proposes replacement names for two species, which were found to be junior homonyms. Other nomenclatorial changes such as introductions of new combinations are also included in the text. Personally, I missed a separate list of all these changes, however formal, which would make the book even more user-friendly.

The book was evidently put together with great care; typographical errors are very scarce, and I enjoyed the sensitive and quite meticulous approach to national alphabets, such as the correct spelling of the Turkish names and that of the Czech ento-

mologist Hrbáček (though I noticed missing diacritical marks in a few Czech locality names). As I am primarily concerned with Central European species, I have checked some of the distributions given in the book, and found no serious flaws. However, this catalogue should not be used as an authoritative source of species distributions, especially of (Central) European taxa. The book tries to avoid using doubtful records (which I regard as strongly positive), and thus some minor inconsistencies inevitably arise. For example, *Hydraena testacea* Curtis is not mentioned from the Czech Republic, although reliably recorded from there by Hrbáček (1951).

As views on the taxonomy and phylogeny of the higher taxonomic units within the family rapidly evolve, the arrangement on the tribal to subgeneric level merits separate discussion. The book is based on the most recent treatment proposed by Perkins (1997). However, this treatment has already met with some opposition, and changes to it are likely. The ongoing discussion is most vividly reflected in the compromised, "traditional" treatment of *Calobius* as a subgenus of *Ochthebius*: It has been considered as a synonym of *Ochthebius* s. str. by Perkins (1997) but almost simultaneously raised to a distinct genus by Delgado & Soler (1997). Similarly, the treatment of *Hadrenya* as a separate subgenus of *Hydraena* leaves a trace: *H. achaica* Jäch is "left" in *Hydraena* s. str. although it is very closely related to *H. (Hadrenya) flavipes* Sturm (a new name which, probably to the surprise of many water beetle workers, replaces *H. minutissima* Stephens).

However, all these little inconsistencies may be easily corrected, e.g., by issuing new versions of the catalogue on CD-ROM in regular intervals to keep the information up-to-date. Altogether, this Hydraenidae catalogue is an admirable piece of work of a high standard, and I strongly recommend the book to all water beetle taxonomists as well as those working on other aspects of Hydraenidae. If this standard is maintained, the series as a whole will undoubtedly become a must for all entomological institutions, being relevant not only to taxonomists but also to people directly or indirectly involved in biodiversity assessments or nature conservation projects.

## REFERENCES

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