EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF ENTOMOLOGY
ISSN (online): 1802-8829
http://www.eje.cz
Eur. J. Entomol. **122**: 330, 2025
doi: 10.14411/eje.2025.037
BOOK REVIEW

Skinner G.J. & Jarman A.P. 2025: ANTS. Pelagic Publishing, London, 304 pp. ISBN 9781784273040. Price GBP 31.99.

The authors are both biologists who have long been interested in ants. Gary J. Skinner began studying ants more than 40 years ago, specialising in the biology of wood ants (*Formica* s. str.). His research yielded several interesting findings that remain unsurpassed to this day. He later worked as a teacher at a boarding school. His first book about British ants, *Ants of the British Isles*, was published in 1996. Andrew P. Jarman has also been fascinated by ants for a long time. Ants are not his main area of work; he specialises in the neurobiology of the fruit fly, *Drosophila melanogaster*. Although neither of the authors is a professional myrmecologist, they are myrmecologists in their knowledge and hearts.

The aim of *Ants* is to introduce the biology and conservation of ants in Britain, Ireland, and the Channel Islands. It is intended for a wide range of readers, from the general public to scientists. Its form perfectly fits its purpose. The language is simple, with scientific terminology kept to a minimum to allow for smooth reading. Technical terms are explained and notes that would otherwise disrupt the flow of the text are provided alongside it. This easily understandable form is not associated with trivial information; the content is well-founded and based on in-depth scientific findings and personal observations. I was pleased that the authors did not solely rely on the latest literature, but also made extensive use of older scientific works (e.g., by M.V. Brian) which are now almost forgotten but still unmatched. Due to the size and scope of the book, much interesting information is mentioned only briefly. For those interested in a more in-depth study, references are provided for further reading on the subject.

The book is divided into the following chapters:

The *Introduction* covers the basic biology, taxonomy, phylogeny and evolution of ants. The rest of the book deals exclusively with ants in Britain and Ireland.

Nesting, territoriality, reproduction, division of labour, feeding, foraging strategies, including chemical bases of recognition and behavior are described in Chapter 2 (*General biology of ants*). A list of the most important traits of nest type and site preference, number of queens per colony, founding habits and nuptial flight is given for each species.

Chapter 3 (*Ants and their environment*) describes communities of ants and their interspecific interactions, the interactions between ants and plants, ants and other animals (guests, predators, mutualists, etc.) as well as the effects of ants on chemical and physical properties of soil.

Chapter 4 (*Distribution and abundance*) forms the core of the book. Each species is depicted, its biology is briefly described and its distribution in the target area is shown on a map. In adition to outdoor-living species, several tramp species are mentioned, but without showing their distribution on British Isles.

Chapter 5 (*Conservation and management*) provides a brief description of the distribution and monitoring of the nine species included in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and offers management recommendations.

Chapter 6 (*Identifying ants*) presents identification keys. The most important of these are identification guides for workers, queens, and males of species using a stereomicroscope. These are supplemented by numerous precise pen drawings and some photographs. My only reservation about the book concerns these keys: the photos should be larger and clearer to enable better species comparison. On the other hand, most other identification keys published by different authors lack photographs entirely. Some species may be difficult to identify precisely due to the absence of morphometrical traits. This is the price of simplicity, and the authors themselves recommend using B. Seifert's *The Ants of Central and Northern Europe* (2018; ISBN 9783936412079) in such cases. In addition to these main keys, two more are included: A quick-check field key for ants and a quick-check key for ant nests in Britain and Ireland. Both can be used in the field with a hand lens. A list of selected synonyms of selected species is provided at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 7 (*Studying ants*) provides an overview of methods for collecting and preserving ants, as well as various methods for studying their behaviour and populations, such as culturing, estimating colony size, mapping territories, observing feeding habits and activity patterns, and examining the effects of ants on other animals.

The final two chapters contain a list of equipment, book suppliers, societies and interest groups (Chapter 8: *Useful addresses, links and other resources*), and a list of recommended and used literature (Chapter 9: *References and further reading*). The book ends with an index of species and terms to enable easy searching of the text.

Overall, although the book focuses almost exclusively on ants in Britain and Ireland, it is also useful for both novice and experienced myrmecologists in continental Europe, and it should be in every entomological library.

Pavel Pech
Research and Breeding Institute of Pomology
Holovousy, Czech Republic