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BOOK REVIEW

PEARCE M.J.: *TERMITES, BIOLOGY AND PEST MANAGEMENT*. CAB International, Wallingford, 1997, xii + 172 pp., 32 plates, ISBN 0-85199-130-0. Price GBP 35.00.

Termites (Isoptera) belong to, economically, one of the most important groups of insects. In spite of that, it is not possible to give even a rough estimate of the losses caused worldwide. Termite damage to buildings has long been accepted as a natural hazard in some countries. Termites also prevent reforestation and can destroy different crops in some areas. However, termites play an important positive role in the regeneration of vegetation destroyed by man, like in tropical Africa where even a specific vegetation formation "termite savanna" is known. The advanced and complex social system, co-operative behaviour, highly differentiated casts, nest-building and defense make termites fascinating for students of insect behaviour as a part of the very modern discipline, sociobiology.

Only two comprehensive compendia on termites exist: "Biology of Termites" (in two volumes, 1969, 1970) by Krishna & Weesner and "Termitologia" (Vols I–III, 1982–1986 in French) edited by Grassé. This book fits in with more concise publications, as was "Termites, Their Recognition and Control" by Harris and "Termites: A World Problem" by N.E. Hickin (not Hicken as listed in References), both of them of earlier date (1961, 1971, respectively). Therefore, this book is a valuable and modern introduction into the experimental and applied study of termites.

The material is presented in seven chapters: (1) Termites as Insects – with tables of generic classification and keys and figures enabling family determination. (2) Distribution – with maps showing the distribution of the main pest groups like the subterranean building pest *Reticulitermes* spp., drywood *Cryptotermes* spp., the very important building pest *Coptotermes* spp. etc. (3) Termite Biology and Behaviour – with special attention paid to termite communication, feeding, water requirements, defence, foraging and nest-building. (4) Nest Systems – with data on wood dwelling termites, subterranean and mound-building termites. (5) Termite Ecology – the soil-modifying role of termites, different termite habitats, predators and parasites in termite nests. (6) Termites as Pests – wood and crop preference with recognition and detection of termite damage. (7) Control Methods – an account of chemical, physical and biological methods of termite control and damage prevention. Very useful are the appendices, giving short and clear descriptions of commonly used techniques: Collection and Identification, Culture Methods, Monitoring Methods, Laboratory Tests Using Termites. References in this book are listed as General, Taxonomic and Biology and Control.

The book will be of vital interest to all who are concerned with termite control and is recommended to all entomologists intending to spend some time in tropical or subtropical countries.

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