

BOOK REVIEW

LIENHARD C.: PSOCOPTÈRES EURO-MÉDITERRANÉENS. Faune de France 83. Fédération Française des Sociétés de Sciences Naturelles, 1998, xx + 517 pp. (in French). ISBN 2-903052-17-4. Price EUR 79.47.

The present monograph has been long awaited by all specialists working with the highly interesting insect order Psocoptera. This book brings for the first time an identification key for all the Western Palearctic (Euro-Mediterranean) species of psocids. The Psocoptera are a small order within the insects, containing about 4,000 species world-wide. The majority of psocids are outdoor species occurring in a wide variety of situations. They are most commonly found on foliage or bark of trees and shrubs, and they are often one of the dominant groups of bark-dwelling insects. Psocids feed mainly on microscopic moulds and fungi, algae or lichens, and they play an important role as primary consumers of the epiphytic microflora in forests. They are also regularly present in litter or uppermost layers of soil. From the 244 Euro-Mediterranean species, fifty-two species are domestic, which corresponds to almost all the domestic psocids known in the world. Some of these synanthropic species, especially those of the genera *Liposcelis* and *Lepinotus*, are quite important from an economic or medical point of view. They often contaminate various stocked foodstuffs (both at homes or in food industry enterprises), grain and seed, or produce allergens in house-dust. They may also cause considerable damage to natural-history collections (mycothecia, herbaria and entomological collections).

The book is divided into four main sections. In an introductory general section (60 pages), the author briefly describes the history of investigation on Psocoptera and reviews the present knowledge of psocid larval and adult morphology, biology, ecology, phylogeny and distribution. This part is not only intended for specialists, but also for any entomologist interested in this insect order which is often neglected in more general treatises. This section also contains a very instructive methodological part describing in detail the technical aspects of the work with these small and delicate insects (collection, preparation, preservation). This will also be particularly useful for non-specialists.

The main, most extensive and important section of the book (about 360 pages) deals with systematics. The morphological

features of the 244 considered species belonging to 65 genera and 25 families are presented in identification keys and diagnoses accompanied by many line drawings. The identification keys to species are preceded by keys to sub-orders, families and genera. The diagnosis of each species is followed by a review of the present knowledge on its biology and distribution.

The next section (22 pages) is devoted to the faunistics. This part includes general remarks about the domestic and cosmopolitan species. The psocid fauna of the area covered is comprehensively analysed, taking into account both the literature and a lot of previously unpublished information. The special faunistic bibliography is sorted here according to individual countries. A well-arranged table (species/country) makes the distributional data for each species easily accessible. This book will be the starting point for any forthcoming faunistic research.

The last section is the general bibliography (40 pages). The extensive number of references (about 1,000) gives access to the entire literature on Western Palearctic Psocoptera.

There are also two appendices. Appendix 1 is a list of abbreviations used in the book and Appendix 2 an alphabetical index of scientific names. Quick orientation is enabled by a detailed table of contents including the complete systematic list of Euro-Mediterranean psocid species. The domestic species are clearly marked in this list, which will be appreciated by all specialists working with synanthropic insects.

The reproduction of highly professional morphological line drawings (148 figure plates) is technically perfect. The book is also equipped with seven black and white and four colour photo plates which demonstrate the general appearance of some species or morphological details.

This book is an excellent monograph for readers interested in the Psocoptera. They will get a perfect overview of all species of the Western Palearctic. Such a book could encourage students of entomology to choose this fascinating group of insects for their research studies. Moreover, it can be recommended not only to specialists of psocids, but to all entomologists, both amateur and professional, especially to those who are interested in forest ecosystems and pedozoology. It is also important for those dealing in some way with synanthropic insects (stocked foodstuff protection, hygienic control, preservation of biological collections).

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