



VAN NOORT S. & BROAD G. 2024: WASPS OF THE WORLD. A GUIDE TO EVERY FAMILY. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 240 pp. ISBN 9780691238548. Price USD 29.95/GBP 25.00.

Series of books introducing various groups of plants and animals are published worldwide. Some of these series are very good and, in addition to having excellent photos, they also offer a high scientific value. The book “*Wasps of the World. A Guide to Every Family*” is a volume of such series, which is published by Princeton University Press from 2022 onwards. The first volume deals with bees and is written by the respected specialist Laurence Packer from University of Toronto, Canada. Beetles are second (published in 2023) and wasps third, while volumes about frogs and shells of the world will be published in forthcoming months.

*Wasps of the world* is an interesting and somewhat unusual work, beginning with the word “wasp” covering the entire Hymenoptera. The authors, respected specialists both in research and popular science, had the goal to introduce every hymenopteran family except the bees (group Anthophila) published previously. Since the number of hymenopteran families is very high, each family is introduced on only one to three pages.

The book begins with chapters (part Introduction) about wasps in general – their anatomy, diversity, evolution, ecology, conservation and phylogeny – and includes an interesting section about photographing wasps. Although this first part is quite short (27 pages), it provides a wealth of information, which is necessary for better understanding the rest of the book. It also contains an overview of the primary knowledge on all the wasp families.

The following chapters are devoted to each wasp family in turn, with regard to the current taxonomic and phylogenetic

knowledge. The text on each group especially contains its phylogenetic origin with a focus on fossil material, their global distribution, and notes on ecology. These ecological notes are usually informed by several representative species, which were chosen to highlight how many interesting and diverse life strategies it is possible to find in one family of wasps. Distribution maps are shown on the bottom-left of the page, with notes about the distribution, the number of genera, habitats, size, activity (diurnal or nocturnal) and diet. The book is full of very nice photos of representative species of each family and their life strategies.

For me as a researcher working with wasps, it is an excellent idea to represent all the members of wasps in one book, which is neither large nor heavy and can be used in the field or when travelling. I am also delighted that Hymenoptera was the first book in the series. However, the target audience for the book are not entomologists but rather laypersons with an interest in insects. Thus, the book contains only very brief info on each group, sources are not cited, and for a deeper understanding and more detailed information, the reader would need to read more comprehensive books or scientific articles. I am sceptical if a book such as this one can be of interest to the non-scientific public, whom are perhaps more likely to favour a focus on more charismatic groups, such as ants, yellow jackets, hornets or pests. My opinion on this book is equivocal because I would recommend it neither to entomologists, nor to the general public, especially since several very good books dealing with the same group of insects are available for everyone. However, the book is well-suited for a reader who wants to have an overview of all Hymenoptera (except the bees), together with distribution maps and nice photos.

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