BOOK REVIEW

HILL, D. S. 1997. The Economic Importance of Insects. Chapman & Hall; London. x + 395 p. ISBN 0-412-49800-6. Hardback. $148.95.

In this book, Hill provides an innovative approach to the treatment of economic entomology. His approach is to provide worldwide taxonomic coverage of economically important insects (and mites but not slugs or snails), with the taxa aggregated under several major pest categories: medical, veterinary, household and stored product, agriculture, and forestry. Each of the major economically important families is discussed briefly. In most cases, specific genera or species are given as examples, accompanied by a few words on geographic range and nature of injury. Chapters on beneficial insects, characteristics of pests, and pest management tactics are also included.

Worldwide coverage of any topic is a difficult undertaking, particularly considering the diversity of insects. However, Hill has admirably identified most of the important taxa. Possibly due to the breadth of the topic, however, precious little text is devoted to any pest or pest group. This book is exceptionally well illustrated with line drawings and black and white photographs showing pests and damage. As an introduction to the taxa causing damage, this book is unsurpassed.

In the introductory section, Hill indicated that an alternative title for this book could be "An introduction to applied entomology," so I tried to envision using this book for an applied entomology course. Perhaps if plant science students were to receive only a single entomology course as part of their curriculum, and there was a strong desire to blend taxonomy with economic entomology, this would serve as a useful text. However, the pest management section is fairly limited, and might need to be supplemented. For example, it would have been appropriate to discuss bait formulations within the pest management section or under the discussion on grasshoppers or cutworms, but it appears nowhere. On a positive note, the treatment of beneficial insects is unusually good.

The traditional economic entomology book focuses on local pests, an unsatisfactory approach for international students, but this book provides a holistic view that will make students from Asia and Africa particularly happy. I believe that most American institutions would want to supplement the reading with local extension material so students would be better equipped to deal with local problems, but this is easy to accomplish. Also, because the text is so taxonomically oriented, a key to the major orders and families, accompanied by laboratory exercises on use of the keys, might be an essential and useful part of a course.

I detected relatively few errors in this book, though of course there are a few factual problems. For example, *Epicauta* beetles are the major blister beetle pests in temperate areas of North America as well as tropical (p. 181); the fruit industry of Florida is worth considerably more than $180 million (p. 357); and though Colorado potato beetle is the major pest of potatoes in many areas of North America and Europe, it is not "the main pest worldwide" (p. 185). Also, there are differences of opinion, such as whether eradication of a pest "should not be done unless really necessary, for the ecological consequences cannot always be predicted." Are the consequences of not eradicating a pest any more predictable? I think not.

On the whole, this book is an excellent addition to the small selection of economic entomology texts available for student use, offering a refreshing, non-chemically oriented view of pests. Though relatively costly, this book should appeal to some instruc-

tors, and may prove to be a useful mechanism to demonstrate the importance of taxonomy to students who otherwise might fail to appreciate its utility.

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