

MCGAVIN, G. C. 2000. Insects[,] spiders and other terrestrial arthropods. Dorling Kindersley Handbooks. Dorling Kindersley; New York. 256 p. ISBN 0-7894-5337-1. Paperback. \$18.95.

Several publishing companies have produced guides to the insects of America north of Mexico. One guide is Borror & White (1970. *A field guide to the insects of America north of Mexico*. Houghton Mifflin; Boston). It is well illustrated by 1300 drawings (including 16 color plates) depicting insects belonging to 579 families. It is one of the Peterson Field Guide Series and is designed to complement other books in this series such as those on mammals and eastern birds. Of course, it doesn't do the job that those on birds and mammals do, because it depicts only a tiny percentage of the >100,000 insects of America north of Mexico. So we are stuck with publishing companies wanting to produce books on insects as "companion" volumes to those on birds, mammals, etc., when this is a mismatch because of the vastly greater number of insect species. Houghton Mifflin has produced a "companion" book on beetles (which still comes nowhere near covering the subject), and eastern butterflies (which does), but we have not seen, nor are likely to see, "companion" volumes on fleas, flies, lice, or termites because those insects lack popular appeal. Entomologists recognize that such guides to insects at large play a role in helping to assign observed insects to the level of order, and to some extent to family, and that they help to educate the general public. Nevertheless, the general public still does not understand that such guides will not allow insects to be identified to the species level, as evidenced by an unjustified (in my view) negative review of Borror & White because a chrysomelid leaf beetle is there illustrated in black and white rather than color which "did not allow the reviewer to identify it" (<http://www.amazon.com>).

If a "guide" to insects serves just the above-mentioned purpose, then why restrict it to insects of America north of Mexico? This book by George McGavin aims at worldwide coverage of insects and other terrestrial arthropods. Armed with it, the reader can assign observed terrestrial arthropods to order, and to a limited extent to family. Families of insects (and some other arthropods) are the focus, and the information presented about each family is well organized visually. The centerpiece of each family presentation is one or more color photographs of adult insects. Although few of these photographs are of insects in nature, they are of high quality, and the paper of the book is glossy throughout to allow excellent reproduction. Labelled arrows point to distinctive structural features. Arranged around the centerpiece are a sketch of a larva or nymph belonging to that family (if it is holometabolous or if the nymphs are aquatic), and text dealing with habitus, life cycle, and distribution. In small, standardized colored boxes at top and bottom of the page are the name of the order, the name of the family represented, the approximate worldwide number of species in that family, the size range (in inches and cm) of adults of the family, and symbols indicating larval diet.

The first 45 pages are an introduction to insects and other arthropods, the organization of this book, macrohabitats and habits, form and function, and they include identification keys to the level of order. On pp. 244-245 is a glossary of essential terms,

although the text in general is written with as little use of specialized terms as possible. Furthermore, the text is written in straightforward English rather than in the bureaucratese that too many entomologists use. On pp. 246-255 is a single index of scientific and vernacular names.

It is not easy to fault this book. If I had organized it, I would not have arranged families alphabetically within orders but would have chosen an arrangement showing relationships; others would have criticized me for doing so. I would have made sure that the green lacewings shown on page 106 were not faded specimens, but had green wings. I would have used the latest concept of the families of Coleoptera rather than an outmoded one. And I would have avoided using the expression "larval breeding areas" for the habitats of ceratopogid larvae, on grounds that larvae do not breed—only adults do so. On the other hand, I like the rational use of and differentiation of the words **ectoparasite** and **ectoparasitoid** in the glossary where too many authors unthinkingly label both "**ectoparasite**." The vernacular names of all families are not all identical to the "common" names decreed by the Entomological Society of America, but could it be that some of the names used are more **common** (whose real meaning is "widely used") than those selected as "common" by that Society; do the 50 or so other English-speaking countries have to follow the decrees of the Society and set aside their (more) common names? For its price, this book is a bargain, and it has set a new, higher standard for "guides" to match.

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