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BOOK REVIEW

GEOMETRID MOTHS OF THE WORLD: A Catalogue (*Lepidoptera, Geometridae*) edited by M. Scoble

1999. CSIRO, Collingwood, Australia. 2 vol. (1,016pp + 129pp + 129pp) (21 x 30cm). \$295.00 cloth (+ CD-ROM). ISBN: 0-643-06304-8.

The British Museum (Natural History), now named the Natural History Museum, London, England, has over the past 150 years accumulated a formidable card catalog of all described names of Lepidoptera and other insects. With this new catalog in book form, we finally have further practical results of their long efforts to document the fauna with a catalog to described species of the family Geometridae. The family had been partially cataloged prior to World War II in the first *Lepidopterorum Catalogus* series, but this was never completed. The present work is a massive (about 12 pounds) compilation in two large volumes, plus a CD-ROM to all the names. It is a great boon to Lepidoptera studies but one is aghast at the price of nearly \$300, and that from a government publisher: the equally large Noctuidae catalog in the *Lepidopterorum Catalogus* (new series), published in 1989, is in 3 volumes (1,314pp) and costs only \$50 for society members. The geometrid catalog is otherwise well bound and finely printed.

The catalog is alphabetical for valid genera and species, with all recognized synonyms listed under each genus or species name: the listing of synonyms is unorthodox, however, since they are also listed alphabetically rather than by date seniority as they should have been. Items lacking include misspellings and emendations, and most frustratingly, all infraspecific names. The author of the Noctuidae catalog (Poole, 1989) also excluded infraspecific names and we have the same problem in this new geometrid catalog: the pedantic argument is repeated that infraspecific names are invalid and should not be noted any further — while it is true that these names are invalid, as soon as one does not list them in a catalog the user then cannot know for certain whether a particular name is truly infraspecific (thus, not of nomenclature validity) or if it was simply accidentally overlooked, and one does not have the citation noted either to check the name in the literature to verify this for oneself. At least in a world catalog, one needs to list all names published, plus all known misspellings and emendations: only in this way can the user use the correct names and verify the status of all the other names. Thus, both the Noctuidae and the Geometridae will require further cataloging to add all the missing infraspecific names that need to be accounted for.

This new catalog appears complete (other than as just noted) up to the end of 1997. Some obscure older geometrid names from Taiwan that I checked as a test, and which had eluded discovery from other sources, were all found in the new catalog, although again not the infraspecific names or misspellings. The index wastes much space in being repeated in its entirety at the end of each volume (rather than having only an index for Volume 1 in that volume), so each index takes up a separately numbered 129 pages. There is a short introduction on the make-up and scope of the catalog, but no comprehensive phylogenetic listing of genera: the latter we only find at the end of Volume 2 and that only by subfamily, without any notation of tribes or subtribes, making for a rather long generic listing for most of the subfamilies: this arrangement is merely taken from the generic arrangement for Geometridae at the BMNH and not from any new generic studies.

Each species entry gives the date, original citation of the name, and location of the holotype; the same is done for any synonyms. Hostplants are noted to some extent for known species, but a quick perusal of the pages will verify that most geometrids have never been reared, particularly those from the tropics. The generic entries give the type-species for each name, again with author, date and citation for each name, plus the same for any synonyms. The generic names also have a notation as to what subfamily they currently are placed in, although this follows the current BMNH classification of Geometridae which is not adopted everywhere in the world: this is all understandable since the

family needs major generic revision on a world basis to verify more accurately where all the genera belong, something which no one has yet attempted on a world basis due to the huge numbers of genera and species involved.

One real annoyance with the catalog (other than the lack of infraspecific names) — although one cannot really expect a catalog to necessarily have this feature — is the lack of a comprehensive bibliography. The abbreviated citations to journals and page numbers are given for all the original descriptions of genera and species in the catalog, but there is no bibliography listing all these papers in full, which would be very useful to users.

The CD-ROM is complicated and cumbersome to use. There is no obvious file to find the catalog, which in fact does not exist since one only gets access to a disk version of the index (1 Mb). There are several directories, each with several files (including MAC versions), most of which pertain to different versions of the 59 color images of geometrid moths that can be viewed from the CD. One almost needs a computer expert to find your way around the CD. Once in the image file, one gets a very slow home page and then another equally slow opening image page, and so on. The files are meant to be used only on the CD: the BMNH has gone out of its way to note to users that all files are copyrighted by the museum, and rather than telling users how to use the CD, each of the “read-me-first” files (I counted at least 3 in different directories) only repeat the single sentence that the BMNH owns the catalog! One can finally determine that one file contains the index listing and this could be copied onto a hard disk for easier use, but it is copy protected by being unreadable, other than if one filtered it through a complex conversion program (this, however, is not feasible due to the size of the file and the remaining complex codings on each line). The BMNH is evidently so paranoid about anyone copying their index to names that they even prevent users from having easy access to it on their own hard drive even just for their personal use (this is standard practice now and is understood to allow only a single personal computer copy and not for multiple copying, much the same as is done for chapter copies for personal use from books or journals).

Researchers on Lepidoptera, particularly for Geometridae of course, plus all research libraries, cannot do without this catalog. The only detraction is the excessive cost of \$295 per set (it was originally advertised during pre-publication at \$400 before being “reduced” to \$295). One can only wonder why the catalog was not published in the world catalog series, *Lepidopterorum Catalogus* (new series), where the resultant cost would have been only about \$75 (at least to society members). Unfortunately, this lack of cooperation with a catalog series specifically for Lepidoptera already since 1989 (and the second series since 1911), only unnecessarily purges the pockets of users for \$220 more than it should have, and all this just for a catalog. And, how will it become available to third world researchers where half the nations have only a per capita income of \$30 per month per person (nearly a year’s wages for a catalog!). Nonetheless, users who can afford it are advised to purchase their copy quickly, since the high cost will undoubtedly lead to its early departure to the “out of print” department, and then it will no doubt be difficult to find even in the rare book market.

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