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Book Review: *An Inordinate Fondness for Beetles* (Evans, A.V. and C.L. Bellamy)

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BOOK REVIEW

EVANS, A. V. AND C. L. BELLAMY. **An Inordinate Fondness for Beetles.** Henry Holt and Company, New York, NY. 208 pp. ISBN 0-8050-3751-9. US $40.00.

This nicely produced book is a visual celebration of beetles. Consider that it has 140 color photographs on 98 color plates . . . and 26 of those plates are of scarabs. Excellent! One should not construe my possible bias (or perhaps even that of the first author) as too narrow in its focus because the breadth of coverage of this volume is truly beetle-wide.

In the Prologue, the authors briefly review the timeless fascination that humans have had with beetles. They note that most people are not aware of the diversity of beetles and are not impressed by such small creatures. Consequently, they indicate that this book is for those who have taken a moment to marvel at these wonderful creatures. Actually, I think the book is also for those of us who intently study beetles. The volume is beautiful enough for a coffee table book and authoritative enough for the laboratory or office.

The book is written in an engaging style that will appeal to the layperson as well as to the scientist. The truly spectacular photographs by Lisa Watson are crystal clear in their focus and depth of field. Yes, they are a bit "artsy" rather than natural, but they are appropriate for this kind of presentation.

In chapter one, the authors provide an overview of taxonomy, systematics, nomenclature, clades, keys, collection management, and beetle biology. They discuss why beetles are so successful (body form and reciprocal interactions with plants) and our continuing dilemma of estimating the number of beetle species. The second chapter details, at some length, beetle morphology, both external and internal.

Beetles preserved as fossils, in amber, or in tar pits begins the third chapter. The discussion then expands to the habitats of beetles living today, including islands, deserts,

mountain peaks, and caves. Beetle life cycles and their variations are the subject of chapter four. The authors give a nice synopsis of mating strategies, bioluminescence, care of young, food habits, mimicry, crypsis, chemical defense, parasitism, and symbiosis. The fifth chapter concerns the relationship between beetles and humans in areas ranging from art, jewelry, food, and medicine to agriculture pests and biocontrol agents. There is also an interesting section of the derivation of some common names of beetles from different languages.

The last chapter is entitled "Beetlephilia." It is an enlightening discussion of why we study beetles, whether it is for practical reasons or reasons of aesthetics. The chapter continues with commentary on endangered species, beetle conservation, and beetles as tools in environmental education.

The volume is concluded with useful appendices. The first is a list of beetle families. The list is modified from J. F. Lawrence and A. F. Newton, Jr. (1995 [pp. 779–1006] In: *Biology, Phylogeny, and Classification of Coleoptera* (J. Pakaluk and S. A. Slipinski, editors); Muzeum i Instytut Zoologii PAN, Warszawa), although Evans and Bellamy don't say exactly how or why it is modified. The second appendix is a list of major world beetle collections. It is arguable whether all the included collections are "major" or if there should not have been some additional collections added. Appendix three is a short list of professional societies dedicated to beetle study. Although The Coleopterists Society is listed, I take exception (as all members of our Society should) to the authors' erroneous observation that "no global societies are yet dedicated to the study of beetles." The masthead of this very Bulletin says "An international journal devoted to the study of beetles," and the inside of the front cover states "The Society is an international organization devoted to the study . . . of beetles of the world." Combine with this the fact that the Coleopterists Society has members in 38 countries, and it becomes clear that this is a "global" society.

Very few errors were noted, and all of these are fairly minor. For example, the color plate on p. 76 is not identified in the legend that appears on that page; the genera *Eupatorus* and *Allomyrina* are incorrectly spelled on the figure legend on p. 137; the figure legend on p. 145 indicates "Loreto Province of Brazil" when Loreto Province is in Peru; and there are spelling and punctuation errors in the reference cited on p. 194.

All in all this is a fine book, and I strongly recommend it for all beetle enthusiasts. Its *real* value might be in educating folks who are not beetle enthusiasts. It is attractively priced (surprise!) at only $40, a real buy when you consider the number of color plates. Evans and Bellamy have provided a real service to the entomological community with this book. It is a modern, refined amalgam of *Beetles* (E. Reitter, 1960, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York. 205 pp.) and *Beetles* (B. Klausnitzer, 1981, Exeter Books, New York. 213 pp.). I predict that you, too, will have an inordinate fondness for this book. But by all means, get your friends and relatives who do not study beetles to have a look also. The more "beetlephilia" we have, the better.

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