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Book Review: *Catalogue of Palaearctic Coleoptera, Volume 3. Scarabaeoidea, Scirtoidea, Dascilloidea, Buprestoidea, Byrrhoidea* (Lobl, I. and A Smetana [EDS.] 2006)

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BOOK REVIEW

LÖBL, I. AND A. SMETANA (EDS.). 2006. **Catalogue of Palaearctic Coleoptera, Volume 3. Scarabaeoidea, Scirtoidea, Dascilloidea, Buprestoidea, Byrrhoidea.** Apollo Books, Stenstrup, Denmark. 690 pp. ISBN #87-88757-59-5. Hard cover. Available in the U.S. from International Specialized Book Service, Inc., 920 NE 58th Ave., Suite 300, Portland, OR, 97213-3786, U.S.A. or apollobooks@vip.cybercity.dk. Price \$134.50.

If done with care and thoroughness, catalogs, as opposed to checklists, can be valuable tools for summarizing taxonomic, nomenclatural, distributional, and literature information about a given group. This volume of the *Catalogue of Palaearctic Coleoptera* has been expertly brought to fruition and is a genuinely wonderful volume of what the editors call “structured knowledge.” Structure, hence enhanced information retrieval, is given to 250 years of discovery and documentation of Palaearctic beetles, thus providing us with a modern snapshot of biodiversity information for a broad geographic area.

This volume is the third in a massive undertaking, and the entire series, when completed, will serve as a benchmark for many decades to come. Volume 1 (2003, 819 pp.) dealt with the Archostemata, Myxophaga, and Adephaga. Volume 2 (2004, 942 pp.) covered the Hydrophiloidea and Staphylinoidea. Volume 4 (2007, 935 pp.) treats the Elateroidea, Derodontoidea, Bostrichoidea, Lymexyloidea, Cleroidea, and Cucujoidea. Eight volumes (with contributions of about 100 authors) are planned, and they will review all of the approximately 100,000 species of beetles known from the Palaearctic Realm.

Previously, the only catalog to the Coleoptera of the world was Junk and Schenckling's *Coleopterorum Catalogus* (1910–1940), but it is woefully out of date. Still, it remains the only source of comprehensive taxonomic information for many families of beetles. The ambitious aim of the new catalog is to provide (1) a complete list of available names (both valid and invalid) of Palaearctic beetles with their correct orthography and publication dates, (2) a complete list of verified references to primary descriptions, and (3) meaningful distributions. The editors are quick to point out that, for the purposes of the catalog, the Palaearctic Region includes some areas that have previously been considered part of the Afrotropical, Oriental, and Pacific Realms. The introduction clearly explains the limits of the region and the rationale for redefining it.

The presentation of families and subfamilies within their respective superfamilies is in accordance with the classification proposed by Lawrence and Newton (1995), although the editors note that recent hypotheses about higher ranks in the Scarabaeoidea are often inconsistent and not strongly supported by phylogenies. Euphemistically, the editors observed that the controversies they encountered with the Scarabaeoidea were significantly greater than with other groups of Polyphaga! Accordingly, they adopt, for the most part, the scarabaeoid classification of Scholtz and Grebennikov (2005) as a point of reference ... although not all the authors were in accordance with this. Hrrmmp, you would think that we scarab workers could get our act together ... but *au contraire*. Perhaps this is simply a reflection of how dynamic scarabaeoid research continues to be!

The present volume includes 20,460 names of extant and 5,664 primary references to genus and species-group names taxa published before 1 January 2004. Extinct taxa, rejected names, misspellings, and *nomina nuda* are not included. The type species for each genus is given, and the presentation of names below the subfamily level is alphabetical. As a matter of practicality and cost, an index of species-group names is not included, but they can be found electronically on the Apollo Books website and at the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle in Geneva (www.ville.ge.ch.musinfo.mhng). Distributions are provided for each species by (1) continent (Europe, North Africa, Asia) followed by (2) letter designations for countries and (3) provinces or autonomous regions for China. There are 38 pages of new nomenclatural and taxonomic acts, some with supporting data and others without comment.

While we may disagree here and there on classification, use of subspecies, or orthography, we can all agree that the availability of so many *verified* literature references is extremely valuable. As is too often the case, authors will copy down a citation from a previous author's work who, in turn, may have done the same thing without confirming the citation with the original source. These kinds of errors can be perpetuated for decades. The verified references in these volumes will provide a definitive source of accurate citations, and this is one of the outstanding features of this work. All titles and periodicals in the literature cited are spelled out in full, and original names are used for authors rather than subsequently adopted names or honorifics (*e.g.*, Laporte instead of Comte de Castenau).

As with any undertaking of this magnitude, some names and citations were missed, but this should not detract from the overall value of the catalog that is, truly, a remarkable synthesis. We should, of course, simply annotate our volumes to include missing information. The catalog(s) will appeal to those conducting research on the Palaearctic fauna, curators and collection managers organizing collections, bibliophiles, and everyone else who values verified literature citations that cover far more than the Palaearctic Realm. I highly recommend this book for those people pursuing these kinds of activities.

Literature Cited

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