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Review of *Texas Bug Book: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* by C. Malcolm Beck and John Howard Garrett

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Texas Bug Book: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly. C. Malcolm Beck and John Howard Garrett. Drawings by Gwen E. Gage. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999. ix+168 pp. Photos, drawings, references, index. \$40.00 cloth (ISBN 0-292-70868-8), \$24.95 paper (ISBN 0-292-70869-6).

Seeing the title of this book prior to reading it, I was a bit concerned about its content and possible negative outlook towards insects. Having worked as an entomologist the past sixteen years and possessing a lifelong appreciation for insects and other arthropods, I tend to think of all insects as “good,” very few if any of them “bad,” and none of them “ugly.” Like it or not, every species of insect serves a positive or beneficial purpose in the great scheme of things within the natural world. Insects ruled this planet

long before humankind became established, continue to dominate the world today, and will undoubtedly be here long after we are gone.

To my surprise, the book *does* present a positive view of insects. The authors state they are not professional entomologists but writing from the perspective of the organic gardener. They have consulted with professional entomologists and add their own personal experiences dealing with insect pests. Beck and Garrett could have put a negative spin on the damage done to plants or crops by insect feeding. Instead, they seek to present a balanced view of insect, plant, and people interactions.

The book's functional layout makes it easy to use. In the introduction the authors explain the problems associated with employing common names, recurring ones for nonprofessional entomologists who rely on regional names for insects instead of scientific Latin species names. A ready example is the word "locust." Most people either associate locusts with grasshoppers or cicadas, two completely different insects with different ways of life. A good instance of name confusion is the book's listing of "harvestman" for cicadas and daddy longlegs. A single species of insect may also have several different common names, and Beck and Garrett attempt to list these when possible. They also offer a brief synopsis of insect life cycles, which is critical to making identifications and deciding on means of control. The authors demonstrate a commonsense approach to gardening, stating that "Getting rid of all bugs, beetles, slugs . . . is impossible." A review of insectivorous animals including birds, bats, reptiles, and amphibians shows that nature generally keeps things in balance. It's refreshing to note the absence of "pesticides" and "insecticides" in the index. While the book illustrates and discusses pest and beneficial arthropods inhabiting gardens or crops within Texas, many of these species are distributed throughout the United States. Insects and other arthropods are presented alphabetically by common names, allowing for quick reference. Scientific names, body size, identification, biology and habits, economic relevance and control methods, both natural and organic, are also listed. The text is extensively illustrated with color photographs which should aid the gardener.

There are some mistakes. The carpenter bee illustration labeled "black dump fly" is inaccurate. The illustration of carpenter ants appears to belong to the ant genus *Crematogaster*. The chigger illustrated as "approximate actual size" is greatly enlarged considering these mites are "microscopic," as the text accurately states. The chigger illustration is actually a female itch mite. The scientific name of harvester ant should read *Pogonomyrmex* spp. The white leafhoppers illustrated belong to the family Flatidae instead of

Cicadellidae. The family name for whitefly should read Aleyrodidae. All scientific family names are omitted from the index though listed in the text for each given species.

Gardeners will find this book appealing and useful. It should certainly be read by those not currently practicing organic techniques for it demonstrates a more sensible and healthy alternative to chemical controls. **W. Eugene Hall**, *Invertebrate Zoology, CU Museum of Natural History, University of Colorado at Boulder*.