

BOOK REVIEW

LaSALLE J. & GAULD I.D. (eds): HYMENOPTERA AND BIODIVERSITY. CAB International, Wallingford, U.K., 1993, xii + 348 pp. ISBN 0-85198-830-X.

Within the past decade insect biodiversity became one of the most important problems of entomology and ecology in general. The order Hymenoptera (with over 115,000 species described) represents an extremely diverse group. Since they belong to the most important group of pollinators, they are absolutely essential to sustaining diversity in plants. Moreover, besides including a large number of very important pest species, Hymenoptera are a major group of seed dispersers, they protect plants from a multitude of herbivores and, thus, they can regulate population size of arthropods.

This volume was written by 25 authors under the editorships of LaSalle and Gauld, specialists in Hymenoptera taxonomy and biology, both working within the entomological department of the British Museum. The main aim of this work is an attempt to answer the following questions: (i) how do Hymenoptera affects diversity other organisms; (ii) are they an extinction prone group and (iii) If Hymenoptera species are differentially removed from terrestrial ecosystems, what will be the consequences?

The volume consists of 15 chapters. Although each of them is equally important the chapters 8 through 11 and 13 through 15 deserve special

attention. The four former discuss the largest group of Hymenoptera, the parasitic Hymenoptera and their importance to natural and agricultural ecosystems, the complex of interactions they have with other species and methods for enhancing their diversity. The three latter study biodiversity as a whole and the methodological problems associated with survey, identification, quantifying and measuring diversity at the world scale.

In order to document formally the extreme diversity of the order, the editors have compiled an appendix summarizing the higher categories of Hymenoptera. All suborders, superfamilies and families are listed and associated with known numbers of species described, their common names and the mode of development of each respective group. This appendix, which is largely commented upon also in Chapter 1, is very useful for non-specialists, enabling a basic orientation within the order.

Although naturally a little heterogeneous, the book undoubtedly fulfilled the authors' original intention to compile evidence to support increased systematic research on Hymenoptera. This publication will be very useful for specialists, general ecologists as well as environmental managers at all levels, as it provides a comprehensive commentary on the progress of biodiversity studies on Hymenoptera.

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