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## BOOK REVIEW

BERENBAUM M.R.: BUGS IN SYSTEM (INSECTS AND THEIR IMPACT ON HUMAN AFFAIRS). Helix Books, Addison-Wesley, Reading, Massachusetts, 1996 (2nd ed.), 377 pp. ISBN 0-201-62499-0. Price USD 25.50.

Until now, there has been probably no predecessor that is similar to Berenbaum's book. The second edition, which appeared last year, is evidence of the value of the book.

Rather than producing a highly illustrated book with full-page color photographs that attract common nature-lovers and make money for the editors, this book contains the modest lay-out and is designed to fulfill completely different goals. Within the book, insects are viewed as important and interesting partners with whom we share the planet. The book begins with "obligatory" chapters regarding classification, nomenclature and physiology of insects. These are followed by chapters that describe insect behavior, social lives and eating habits with all their odd appetites, and insect relationships with humans. Each chapter provides a wealth of information that is of interest to both the laymen and professional entomologist. For instance, it is little-known that the decline of the South Song Dynasty was attributed, in part, to the passion of the premier Jia Sidao for cricket fighting and his consequent neglect of state affairs. Or that the principal pollinator of cacao trees is a tiny midge in the family

Ceratopogonidae that is related to small cosmopolitan blood-sucking flies that are vectors of benign types of filariasis in tropical regions. The book also contains "galenicals" and, if you like, you can learn to make an infusion of crushed ants in alcohol or oil to counteract various skin disorders. The book is literally packed with information of this kind. The sources of Berenbaum's information, the majority of which are original papers, are fully cited. This helps readers who desire further details pursue more information.

The book is not only notable for the freshness of its approach and simplicity, but also for the clearly comprehensive fashion with which it was written. It was obviously intentionally, illustrated with few well-chosen, innovative figures. One minor disadvantage is the printing quality of these pictures (a kind of photo offset process) which is less than excellent, however, it was probably chosen to keep costs at a minimum.

In summary, the book is highly recommended to all those interested in insects, especially those who enjoy a lively style of writing with a "cultural" and "human" viewpoint of view. Entomological scholars can also use the book as an ideal, relaxing reading companion. It would not be surprising if the book is read from cover to cover in one sitting.

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