BOOK REVIEWS


This monumental volume was the first to be published in the series Nederlandse Fauna (Fauna of the Netherlands) in 1997 and now has reached its first reprint. That in itself is already one of the best recommendations the book can get. One might expect that a monograph like this, not dealing with the most popular group of insects and in Dutch language, would not escape the status of a niche product. That it has come to a reprint in such a relatively short time shows that the book is much more than that.

The book starts with the chapters Introduction, Historical overview, Systematics and taxonomy, Biology, Acoustics, Ecology, the Orthoptera project, Identification and Species. The title of most chapters needs no elaboration and they all treat the covered subject in detail. Even something complex as major nomenclatorial rules and problematic issues one might encounter (synonymy, homonymy, wrong interpretation, etc.) are explained in understandable language, so that even a layman ought to understand it.

A chapter needing some clarification is the one called Orthoptera project. A great deal of information that formed the basis of the book was collected during the Orthoptera project that was co-ordinated by the European Invertebrate Survey – Netherlands (1990-1994). It is clearly documented how the information (both distributional and ecological) were collected and processed. The information was collected from existing museum collections and during uncountable field trips during the project and the years after.

A great deal of care is also put into the keys. A clear drawing or photograph illustrates virtually every character. Here, full use is made of the spot colour that is used throughout the book by highlighting the details. In addition to a morphological key, a key is provided to identify the species by their songs (or other produced sounds, like drumming). In association with this key there is the CD-ROM with songs (sounds) of all species.

The main part of the book is taken by the species descriptions. In all 45 indigenous species are described in detail: morphology, biology (cycle, food, flight and dispersal powers, song), identification, specific distribution, occurrence in the Netherlands (pre- and post-1980, habitat, associated species), conservation and recording. Each facet is accompanied with clear figures and/or tables with a summary of available data to substantiate the text. It should be noted, however, that several developments in the Dutch orthopteroid fauna after the original volume was published have not been addressed. The rediscovery of a species that was thought to be extinct from the Netherlands (Gamphocelis glabra: Van den Berg et al. 2000), two species new to the fauna (Oecanthus bellucens: Felix & Van Klee 2004, Metroptera bicolor: Felix 2004) and a number of notable range expansions (e.g. Phaneroptera falcata, Meconema meridionale, Conocephalus discolor, Kleukers 2002, Felix & Van Hoof 2004) are not even mentioned on an in-lay.

Four chapters after the species descriptions mainly deal with interpretation of the collected data and the (possible) consequences. They are presented in four chapters: Changes in the Dutch orthopteroid fauna, Conservation and management, Orthoptera in the Dutch landscape and Observation and recording.

The final chapters contain a glossary, an extensive list of literature, an English summary and several appendices, and geographical and taxonomical indices.

The whole book is produced very nicely, with optimal use of the spot colour to highlight illustrations, boxes and tables. Illustrations are of excellent quality and 14 full colour plates brighten the book up even further with photographs of adults, some species details and habitat shots.

References


