Book review


Finally there is a compact English handbook for the identification of the Diptera families of Europe. The Dutch version was published a year earlier and it has been translated, even more thoroughly tested and revised where necessary. Several parts of the key and family discussions have been updated to deal with a number of aberrant or variable groups and additional figures have been added. Species numbers for the Netherlands and Belgium have been replaced by the number of European genera and an estimate of the number of species.

The Introduction clearly states the book’s history, geographical scope and systematic context and gives a broader view of “the Diptera”. The Classification chapter itself is rather general in content and it mostly is a table with the actual classification of the 132 families in the key. Terminology used in the book is covered by more than ten pages and covers every term used in the keys, giving references to figures illustrating the feature or cross referring to a larger feature that is more thoroughly discussed.

Next follows the Identification key, which is extensively illustrated, usually with the text on the right page and the figures on the left. This allows the use of the key with very little need to turn pages to see relevant illustrations. Some pages with figures look a little crowded which is the result of the addition of figures after the revision. Since the figures are not all from the same source the styles vary but this is an aesthetic objection only.

At several instances in the key remarks have been added to assist in the use of the key or to indicate one or more groups that appear elsewhere in the key but that have a similar combination of characters. The choice was made to precede these remarks with “>>>” rather than use a smaller or different font for the remark which would have more clearly indicated their status as remark.

The use of the keys is straightforward, though some may have to get used to the characters used for some of the main divisions. Characters like the number and position of the costal breaks or the presence or absence of vibrissae, that were frequently used in older keys, are avoided for major divisions in the key, either because families are not constant in that respect or because the features are not always easily interpreted. A number of specialists have tested the key using both “everyday” taxa but also some aberrant or rather outlandish taxa from the edges of the area covered. This should ensure that all European flies can be identified to the family level. And sure enough, the chloropid *Dicraeus raptus* (Haliday, 1838) keys out without any problem, even though the cross vein DM–Cu is absent (rather uncharacteristic in the family) and wingless Sciaridae run to the correct couplet every time.

After the keys all families are discussed in brief chapters with sections dealing with systematics (classification in general terms, number of European genera, estimate of number of species in Europe), diagnosis and biology and references to important literature.

These chapters have also been updated in the translation and even more care has been taken to mention important aberrations. Still, so many families have one or more aberrant taxa making it impossible to include them all (for example the aberrant wing veination of *D. raptus* mentioned above is not given). Using the name *Icherya* rather than *Icerya* for a coccoid (in Cryptochaetidae biology) is one of the very few minor errors that could be found.

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The list with references is extensive and is followed by a list of all illustrations, credits for the use of illustrations and the acknowledgements.

The book is well produced. An added bonus, for easier use of the book, is that the insides of the cover have been used to give illustrations with morphological terms (front cover) and an abstract key for quick reference to parts of the key for more experienced users. Its reasonable size and prize make this book a must for every dipterist and otherwise interested entomologist.

Paul L.Th. Beuk


With this title, the KNNV publishers, known as producers of Dutch nature books, continue publishing books for the international market. This book reviews a very actual theme, and one that should interest us all.

The organisation of the book is somewhat curious: there are eight chapters, from “history”, “patterns of bio-invasions”, “impacts”, “lessons learned” etc., but they are intermixed by a huge number of “boxes” (87 in all), that give examples of cases. The mixing of the two kinds of text, with slight lay-out difference only, makes reading the book cumbersome. On the other hand, the case studies are interesting reading, although finding your way through it is quite a challenge. Many deal with invasions of pathogens, including historic ones, such as the plague, the foot-and-mouth disease, but also plants, insects, island invasions, extinctions, etc. The sources are dutifully cited, although one sometimes wonders why rather cryptic sources are used in cases were better officially published studies exist as well. An example is the correct name of the Varroa mite, for which an interview that I have given to the journal “Bionieuws” is cited: in passing I mentioned this. There are, however, several articles, that would have been a much better source.

Reading through this book, one realises the disaster brought about by our omnipresence on this planet. Reading is interesting, but also tiring by the enormous flood of information. Finding back something can therefore also be difficult. It is a pity that no separate index to the boxes is included.

Despite the aim to sell this book to the international market, it has a strong Dutch bias. Nevertheless, the book is advised as extensive overview of the subject and important for policy makers and conservationists, to understand the impact of what we are doing with our travel and trade.

Erik J. van Nieukerken