

BOOK REVIEW

Forest Spiders of South East Asia. Christa L. Deeleman-Reinhold. 2001. K. Brill NV. Leiden, The Netherlands. *xii* + 592 pages. ISBN 90-04-11959-0. US\$200. (US and Canadian orders to cs@brillusa.com)

The title of this book suggests a broad coverage of the south east Asian fauna, but the subtitle quickly reveals that its main subject matter is a revision of just six families from the area. Whether additional volumes on other families are projected is not stated.

The book is well made, the printing, paper and binding all of high quality, print clear and easily readable, illustrations well laid out and of generous size, and distribution maps (50 of them) large and clear. The author is to be complimented on this culmination of 20 years of research in many parts of south east Asia.

An introductory section of 26 pages deals briefly with objectives, definition of the area covered (Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia exclusive of Irian Jaya), history of araneology of the area, some aspects of spider natural history, taxonomy and zoogeography, and methods of collecting and study. A six page glossary follows the introduction and is succeeded by a 40 page illustrated key to araneomorph spider families (liphistiids and mygalomorphs are keyed only to order-group level). The key runs to only 48 couplets, 33 of the 40 pages are taken up by 131 figures. (These figures are numbered separately from and in addition to the figures in the revisionary section.)

The bulk of the book, almost 500 pages, consists of a study of the forest spiders of six families – Clubionidae, Corinnidae, Liocranidae, Gnaphosidae, Prodidomidae and Trochanteriidae. A seventh family, Miturgidae, is mentioned only to be dismissed as not occurring in south east Asia. (The author has returned the Butichurinae to the family Clubionidae.)

A new subfamily, 18 new genera and over 100 new species are described, the great majority of them in the first three of the families listed above. The illustrations (989 of them)

are mostly of palps and epigyna or habitus (minus legs or legs shown on one side), with various other structures shown as appropriate.

Lists of species from other tropical Asian areas are presented, and unidentified specimens are mentioned with brief notes, and shown on the distribution maps. Occasional genera from outside the area are included. The author states that “type species of all genera ostensibly present in the tropical Asian region have been included.”

Diagnoses and descriptions are given for both new and previously described taxa. The species descriptions include primarily measurements, short notes on coloration, cheliceral teeth, leg spination and special structures such as abdominal scuta. Genital structures are discussed largely in the diagnoses. Other information includes collection data, type locality, habitat, distribution and (usually) etymology of new names. The taxonomic section is followed by acknowledgements (two pages), a list of arachnological periodicals and societies (one page), a list of references (six pages), index (nine pages), and eight photographic color plates with 19 illustrations, including the remarkable ant-mimicking corinnid *Pranburia*.

This is, so far as I know, the first and only high-quality major taxonomic work on south Asian spiders so far produced. The author is surely to be congratulated on a huge job well done. The criticisms below (and some criticisms are always called for by a work of this size) do not detract significantly from the work.

The most obvious, and at first rather jarring, defect is in the illustrations, a large number of which are quite noticeably asymmetrical. Producing symmetrical drawings can be difficult, but a simple trick solves the problem. (Some

specimens, of course, really are asymmetrical, but they are few.) Details seem fuzzy in some drawings, but this cannot be judged properly without comparison with specimens.

There are frequent minor errors of spelling and grammar, and awkwardnesses, of English usage. I assume this results from the author's writing in what is not her first language. The publisher should bear some of the responsibility for this.

Two terms used frequently in the text activate two of my pet peeves. The words "chitinized" and "sclerotized" are both used for describing hard and rigid structures. Chitinized is not appropriate for this meaning, though it was commonly so used in older literature. Chitin is a soft, flexible substance. Hardening is by sclerotization. The term "vulva" is used for internal female genitalic structures, a common usage in Europe, but entirely

inappropriate. The word vulva, simply transferred from vertebrate anatomy, refers specifically to *external*, not internal structures. I see no problem in simply referring to the whole secondary genitalic apparatus, external and internal, as the epigynum, and referring to, e.g., "ventral view" and "dorsal view, cleared."

It is astonishing to have two major works on tropical Asian spiders appear nearly simultaneously, especially two so well done. This volume, in conjunction with Frances and John Murphy's, should surely stimulate interest in south east Asian spiders. It is unfortunate that the very high price of the present volume will probably severely limit its availability. The contrast in prices of the two works could scarcely be greater.

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