

BOOK REVIEW

Keegan, Hugh L. 1980. *Scorpions of Medical Importance*. Univ. Press of Mississippi, Jackson. 140 pp. (\$22.50).

Perusing the outside back cover the potential buyer learns that this book's scope is to present "an account of the distribution, morphology, biology and classification of these scorpions considered to be of medical importance," and that "A valuable feature of *Scorpions of Medical Importance* is the outstanding drawings that have been used to illustrate the species. It is not often that one comes across drawings so striking in their precision and attention to even the most minute details."

Between the covers the reader finds six chapters, each with its own list of references. The chapters are summarized and characterized below:

Chapter 1—Scorpion Morphology and Biology. A 13 page chapter, of which five pages are plates and two are references. In general it presents a good, albeit brief review of morphology and biology. I was slightly disturbed upon reading that there are six, rather than the customary five metasomal segments plus the telson.

Chapter 2—Geographic distribution of Dangerously Venomous Scorpions. A six page chapter with a one-half page of text, a four page long table, and two pages of references. The table lists, by country, the species considered of medical importance. It also includes some countries which appear to have no scorpionism problems. The table is hard to follow at times, and it's occasionally contradicted by later statements in the text about both the medical importance (*Tityus trivittatus* Kraepelin), and the distribution (*Centruroides sculpturatus* Ewing in Mexico) of some dangerous species.

Chapter 3—Clinical Aspects of Scorpion Envenomation. This eight page chapter exemplifies the problems associated with envenomation accidents in general, such as the rather variable symptomatology, and the fact that there is no general agreement as to the cause of death. It includes a one and a half page table of symptoms produced by "selected species of medical importance" (actually only four species represented), and a list of current (1978) antivenin production laboratories.

Chapter 4—Scorpion Control and Prevention of Scorpion Stings. This chapter includes three and a half pages of text and a page of references touching upon preventive, mechanical, and chemical control measures. Some of the methods suggested are no longer valid: the use of chlordane (2%) against anything other than termites and when used by anyone other than a licensed pest control operator is illegal in the United States.

Chapter 5—Classification of Scorpions. Two pages of text in which six families (Chaerilidae omitted) are briefly characterized morphologically. The incorrect spellings *Vejovis* and *Vejovidae* are unnecessarily perpetuated. No list of references is given with this chapter.

Chapter 6—Accounts of Genera and Species. A 90 page chapter, of which six are references and 53 are illustrations. Twenty-six species are each given two full pages of illustrations: one page being an entire dorsal view; the other detailing lateral and ventral views of the metasoma, the dorsoexternal aspect of the pedipalp chela, dorsal aspect of the chelicera (fingers closed), the sternopectinal area, and a ventral view of the prosoma and mesosoma. The drawings are indeed striking in their precision and are very nice pieces of artwork, but they are deemed useless for identification and/or recognition purposes. The species illustrated appear to have been chosen on the basis of their availability while the author was in Japan (where five artists prepared the drawings). Of 26 species listed in Chapter 2 as being of medical importance, only 14 are illustrated. And 12 species of little or no medical importance (perhaps other than their large size and potential for entomophobia) are included.

For most arachnologists the overall usefulness of this book resides in the references provided at the end of the chapters, and the justification for such a high-priced partial bibliography is the aesthetic value of the illustrations.

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