

BOOK REVIEW

NEW ZEALAND SPIDERS by R. R. and L. M. Forster. Collins Bros. and Co., Ltd., Auckland. \$10.60, 254 pages, ill. 1973.

The first 30 pages are given over to the structure and behavior of spiders in general. This is followed by 15 pages given over to spider relatives, i.e., mites, false scorpions, and mostly harvestmen. The bulk of the book is devoted to the different kinds of spiders. This section is followed by 10 pages on spider venom and 12 on collecting and preparation of specimens for study. The book closes with a short bibliography and an index.

There are 164 illustrations in black and white intermixed with 132 color photographs. These latter are excellent, and, by lacking those faults which this reviewer pointed out for those supplied by Mascord in his book "Australian spiders in color" are far superior than those. In fact, the color photos alone are worth the price of the book! The drawings were done by Barry Weston, the outstanding artist who did the drawings for Forster's technical papers from the Otago Museum.

The book is intended primarily for the general reader, not for the specialist, and is in the style of McKeown's "Australian spiders." The spiders were taken up according to their habits, with chapters devoted to the jumping, crab, vagabond, wolf, trapdoor spiders and web builders, etc. Most of the information on habits is based on their own observations, but the Forsters have not hesitated to supply accounts from various predecessors (some of whom were observant "laymen") in the manner used by McKeown.

Although there are no keys for identification, and characters such as the genitalia are not included in the descriptive information, the latter plus the illustrations supplied enable recognition in many cases. For those families with representatives in the northern hemisphere the information on habits, behavior, life cycles, etc., is of course similar to what has already been made known, though nevertheless interestingly given. But for the Toxopidae, Amaurobioididae, Desidae, Gradungulidae, Megadictynidae, Archaeidae and Symphytognathidae, which are not, or else little, known from elsewhere, the Forsters supply accounts which are often the first that make known for those spiders their habits and behavior.

Workers actively engaged in araneological research might have liked to see included accounts of the more recent researches on spiders. These include the morphology of sense organs, various aspects of physiology and the extensive work on ecology. Likewise, those working in taxonomy might not agree with their family placement and relationships of some of the spiders. Most will object to the use of the name *Aranea* for the now legal *Araneus*. There are few errors. One concerns the exchanging of labels for Figs. 14d and 14e, and the inverting of the drawing for Fig. 14d.

While from the point of view of species determination the book is naturally of greatest value to New Zealanders, it will delight others, especially those living in the northern hemisphere, much as they had been delighted by the reading of McKeown's book, and Gertsch's "American Spiders." The Forsters deserve our thanks for producing such an excellent volume.

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