

HANDBOOK OF COMMON NEW GUINEA BEETLES, by J. Linsley Gressitt and Richard W. Hornabrook, 1977, Wau Ecology Institute, Box 77, Wau, Papua New Guinea, viii + 87 pp., with 36 figs. US \$4.50, AU \$3.50, K 3.00.

The orientation of this small, colorfully covered handbook is toward local beginner coleopterists, amateurs and

students alike; it hits the mark and certainly will fill the need, considering the Papuan paucity of such literature.

The authors provide a general discussion of beetle natural history as an introduction covering such topics as occurrence, size and diversity, biology and life history, ecology and economic importance, biogeography, body structures, and classification. This treatment is quite general but much of it is derived specifically from New Guinea examples or events, especially biogeography. The key to common families found in New Guinea is partially adapted from Crowson's world key to beetles. Following the key is an annotated list of families thought by the authors to represent 90% of what beginners might find. Each family is characterized structurally and behaviorally, and their natural history is given in general. Common New Guinea genera are listed at the close of each family section. Illustrations, some in color, or photographs (black and white) are provided to represent each of the 46 families covered by the text.

One and a half pages are devoted to collection and preservation of beetle specimens; it is noted too that collecting can be a "stimulating and satisfying hobby" as well as being scientifically oriented. The list of references covers papers cited and is also bibliographic for New Guinea and neighboring areas, but lists only 43 authors/ 67 papers, for a fauna of over 25,000 species. A glossary of structural, ecological and taxonomic terms is provided and all scientific names are indexed.

The pros: Beginners now have a single source with which to begin study of the New Guinea beetle fauna and the book is handy to carry into the field. The illustrations are ample and provide the important "gestalt" necessary to recognize families in the field. The key is complex enough to do the job but simple enough to keep the user interested. The color plates provide a sample of what might be expected of an exotic combination of species such as that of New Guinea. The annotations for each family provide enough natural history data to entice the beginner to more study.

The cons: As in all works of this sort, the temptation to abridge was not overcome, thus not all beetle groups of New Guinea were covered in text or in the key. Hence the book is useless to any but the rank beginner who will not likely come across a missing family for about a week of collecting, and when one of these families is discovered and the handbook found to be wanting, the beginner will become discouraged and not use the book again. I have seen this happen often in introductory entomology classes with other such books. Not enough sophisticated data are given regarding New Guinea to capture the scientific market. The illustrations (including color plates) are flat and rough and specimen "lighting" totally inconsistent, e.g., Fig. 8 was anteriorly lit, Fig. 9 left lit, Fig. 3 right lit. The photos of Plates 5-10 are even worse. This inconsistency leaves the user without good impressions of sculpture and shape. It is apparent the illustrator(s) have talent but they need lessons on proper use of light.

In summary, I regard this book as only a beginning, perhaps a beginning for some young coleopterist who will eventually produce a useful contribution like that of Arnett's "A Manual for Identification of the Beetles of the United States." If this is the result, the book is more than worth its price.

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