

Book review – Arthropod biology – the dark side

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Aspöck, H. (ed.) 2010. **Krank durch Arthropoden.** – Denisia 30: 888 pp. (In German, contributions with abstract in English). ISSN 1608–8700. € 85.– [hardcover].

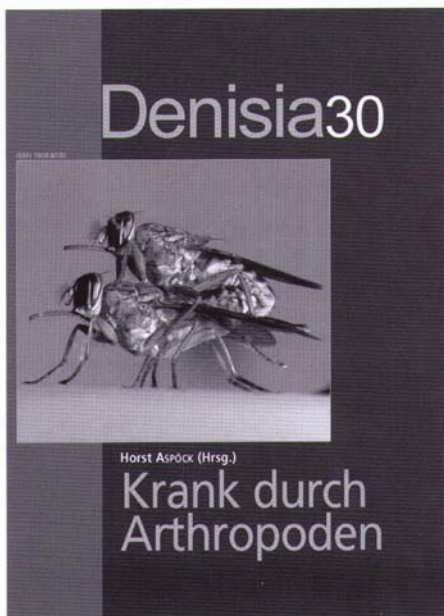
I think it is safe to assume that most readers of this journal entertain an affectionate relationship to their study objects – yet even a short browse through the book “Krank durch Arthropoden” (Arthropod-borne diseases) impressively demonstrates the dark side of the most successful animal group of all times. The book addresses the medical aspect of human ecology in relation to arthropod biology. Horst Aspöck, one of the internationally most renowned medical entomologists, has accomplished a truly Herculean task: not only has he edited a most impressive volume, even by merely physical standards (21 × 27.5 × 4.5 cm, 888 pages, 7 pounds!), but acted as author or co-author on 19 of the 47 contributions. These are arranged in 6 parts: General information (4 articles), biological characterisation and medical importance of select arthropod groups (11 articles), arthropods causing diseases (9 articles), arthropods as vectors of diseases (20 articles), medical and therapeutical use of arthropods (2 articles) and forensic entomology (1 article). Thanks to Horst Aspöck’s professional reputation and personal charisma, he has been able to win over contributing authors with a wide expertise in the field of medical entomology. The book contains a wealth of information on nearly all aspects of hundreds of well- and lesser known arthropod-borne diseases on a global scale.

All articles are very well-written and make interesting reading for the professional biologist, as well as for an interested lay audience. The volume is amply illustrated with hundreds of photographs of organisms and symptoms, explanatory sketches, many of them in colour, and of very good quality throughout. Historical aspects and cultural context are taken into account, making the book hard to put down once one has started reading. A 27 page-long index containing indices of diseases, relevant key-words, trivial names, viruses, genera and higher categories as well as a list of bi- and

trinomina which provide the necessary help to retrieve even small bits of information.

The book is highly recommended for anyone interested in arthropod biology and medical entomology in the widest sense. Given the quality of the content and its presentation, the book is very reasonably priced.

Authors, editor and publisher can only be congratulated for having produced a milestone volume on medical arthropod biology. Finally, I have but one suggestion: an English and/or French translation would certainly help to ensure the global distribution which this book deserves.



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