Buchbesprechung

Oxford University Press, Oxford - New York 1993

ITÔ, Y.: Behaviour and Social Evolution of Wasps. The Communal Aggregation Hypothesis. Oxford Series in Ecology and Evolution, edited by R. M. MAY & P. H. HARVEY; 160 pages with 26 black & white pictures, tables and graphics, 15.5 x 23 cm, paperback, £ 13.50

In this book, Yosiaki ITô presents data on tropical wasps which encourage him to suggest that kin selection has been over-emphasized as an evolutionary explanation of sociality. He concentrates on the Vespidae (paper wasps and hornets), a group much discussed by evolutionary biologists because it exhibits all stages of social evolution: subsociality, primitive eusociality, and advanced eusociality. The author reports field observations by himself and others in Central America, Asia, and Australia, showing that multiple egg-layers in a nest are not uncommon. Because coexistence of many 'queens' leads to lower relatedness among colony members than in single-queen colonies, he suggests that kin selection may not be the most powerful force determining observed social patterns. Instead, subsocial wasps may first have aggregated for defence purposes in habitats with a high risk of predation, with mutualistic associations among many queens. Through parental manipulation and then kin selection, differentiation into within-generation castes may have followed. Of interest to all students of ecology, evolution, and behaviour, this book beautifully illustrates the ability to combine wide-ranging data with thoughtful questions that is the author's trademark.

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