

NONVEILLER, Guido (1999): The pioneers of the research on the insects of Dalmatia. Croatian Natural History Museum, Zagreb. x+390 pp., illustrated. ISBN 935-6645-04-1. Price: 200 kn.

The first edition of this book was published in Croatian language in 1989 and therefore had a limited distribution. Ten years later the Croatian Natural History Museum took care of a new edition in English language.

Dalmatia is the coastal province of current Croatia. Its famous karst, caves and islands have attracted naturalists and researchers for centuries. This book focuses on early entomologists and insect collectors, although many of them were interested also in other animal groups or plants. One example is Paul KAMMERER, a famous herpetologist from Vienna, who also at times collected insects in Dalmatia.

In chapter I the well-known coleopterologist and speleologist G. NONVEILLER (1913-2002) describes the early history of insect collecting in Dalmatia, starting with Alberto FORTIS of Venice who published a book „Viaggio in Dalmazia“ in 1774 in which he dealt with pest insects. Four other examples of early naturalists are added.

Chapter II deals with 60 entomologists from Dalmatia. For each person a small chapter is given with a summary of known biographical data and activities in the region.

Chapter III treats 38 entomologists from adjacent countries such as Slovenia, Croatia excluding Dalmatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Vojvodina and Macedonia.

Chapter IV comments on the activities of 274 European entomologists who in some ways contributed to the knowledge of insects of Dalmatia. Among those „entomologists“ the reader will find also persons like Anton KOLENATI (1813-1864) from Prague who also named species of European bats. In an interesting table a chronology of the visits (between 1811 and 1939) of most of these European researchers is given, including the year of visit, the domicile of the person, the group of insects studied, and the area visited in Dalmatia. In total, information on 376 persons can be found in chapters I to IV.

Chapter V presents a review of the knowledge on the insects of Dalmatia on the eve of world war II.

Chapter VI comments on the insect trade market which played an important role at those times. The author states that „the majority of the entomologists involved in the commerce of insects were at the same time pioneers of entomological research in Dalmatia.“

An epilogue, footnotes, an index of entomologists mentioned in the book, an index of insects mentioned, an alphabetical index of the species, a list of references, and a list of figures conclude the volume.

I found this book a useful source for all readers interested in the history of collectors and collections of insects and other animals from Dalmatia and adjacent regions of eastern Europe.

Rainer HUTTERER (Bonn)

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Autor(en)/Author(s): Hutterer Rainer

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