Book review

CZECHOWSKI, W., RADCHENKO, A., CZECHOWSKA, W. & VEPSÄLÄINEN, K. 2012: The ants of Poland with reference to the myrmecofauna of Europe

Fauna Poloniae 4, new series, Museum and Institute of Zoology of the Polish Academy of Sciences and Natura optima dux Foundation; 173 × 243 mm, hardcover, 496 pages, 201 maps, 55 plates with several hundred SEM photographs of morphological details, 33 figures with drawings, 13 tables; ISBN 978-83-930773-4-2; Price: € 95.-

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The book by Wojciech CZECHOWSKI, Alexander RADCHENKO, Wiesława CZECHOWSKA, and Kari VEPSÄLÄINEN is an updated and expanded version of a previous monograph, "The ants of Poland" by CZECHOWSKI & al. (2002; Museum and Institute of Zoology PAS, Studio 1, Warsaw, 200 pp.). Several taxonomic contributions, nomenclatorial changes and many new faunistic data necessitated this update. The book is expanded by chapters dealing with the European fauna and general considerations on myrmecology.

The foreword by Kari Vepsäläinen is a stimulating overview on "Trends in Myrmecology", starting with Aristotle and ending with an appreciation of the "increasing pace and success to integrate myrmecology to the general field of evolutionary biology".

The very short introduction is chiefly dedicated to the history of myrmecology in Poland.

Chapter 1 presents a "Checklist of the ant taxa of Europe", as of December 2010. It is a simple genus and species list of the 613 species recognised as valid plus the ten species "formally not yet described" (e.g., *Messor structor* sp. B); no subspecies or synonyms are added. The usefulness of such a list in the era of the internet, where constantly updated checklists are available, might be questioned, especially when the checklist is already partly outdated when the book appears (e.g., the *Bothriomyrmex* review by SEIFERT 2012: Myrmecological News 17: 91-104 could not be considered anymore). Was it an economic consideration of the publisher to sacrifice 18 print pages for giving the book a more international flair?

Chapter 2 is the heart of the book, the "Faunistic catalogue of the ants of Poland". It treats the 103 ant species (including six introduced species) and 25 genera reported in Poland until 2010. For each genus, habitus drawings are provided which were taken from RADCHENKO & al. (2004: Mrówki – Formicidae. Klucze do oznaczania owadow Polski (XXIV, 63). – Polskie Towarz ystwo Entomologiczne, Toruń, 138 pp). For each species, a short synonymy, the general distribution, the detailed distribution in Poland, and a summary of its biology are presented. The conservation status is added where applicable. For most species, two maps are added, one showing the distribution in Poland and another one the general distribution. All maps were carefully updated and graphically improved, whereby they became much more informative than the ones in the predecessor book. "Notes" on several genera and species (e.g., ten in the genus *Formica*) reflect difficulties and controversies in taxonomy and identification.

Chapter 3 describes the "Characteristics of the Polish myrmecofauna". The chapter is foremost interesting to the Polish myrmecologist / entomologist. However, the zoogeographical and ecological classifications of species are worth to be compared with the situations in neighbouring or more southern countries.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to "Keys for identification". It includes keys to European subfamilies and genera (workers, queens, and males), and keys to the species of Poland and adjacent regions (workers; queens and males facultatively). The keys are richly illustrated by SEM photographs of very high quality (55 plates). The species keys are "deliberately simplified" and "user-friendly", as stated by the authors who "recommend to consult the more sophisticated ... key by SEIFERT (2007 [Die Ameisen Mittel- und Nordeuropas. – Lutra Verlags- und Vertriebsgesellschaft, Tauer, 368 pp.])", when the user is "in doubt". However, the authors do not explain when the user should be alert for possible misidentifications. For example, the *Tetramorium caespitum /impurum*-complex is reduced to two species, *T. caespitum* and *T. impurum*. I regard this simplification as a weakness of the book, because a safe species identification is the primary step for all further studies.

For a book published in 2012, it is notable that it is without colour. However, the excellent craftsmanship (figure quality, printing and binding) will delight the book lover and justifies the relatively high sales price.

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