

Book Review

Rotschke, H. & K. Huber (eds.) 2002. The Noctuids (Noctuidae) of Central Europe. An Interactive Identification Guide on CD-ROM. ISBN 3-9805958-5-1. Price: 99 EURO. Orders: V.I.M. Verlag für interaktive Medien GbR, Orchideenweg 12, D-76571 Gaggenau, Germany. e-mail: postmaster@vim.de. <http://www.vim.de>

“The Noctuids (Noctuidae) of Central Europe” is the first CD in the interactive series “The Moths and the Butterflies of the World”. It is a part of the “World Species Database, Professional Identification Series”. When asked to review this software I was, initially, a little bit sceptical about its value, but several hours later I found myself still sitting at the computer, enjoying this marvellous product and saying to myself “What a wonderful program, I must have it!” The guide covers Denmark, Germany, Belgium, The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Austria, northern Italy (Italian Alps), Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Poland. The latest version of the CD contains more than 1300 pictures of 740 species. Species are shown on several plates, and the underside of many are also illustrated. Details of wings pattern are provided. For difficult to identify, closely related species, detailed information for separation is included, for example figures of genitalia. Technical terms used are explained by figures in the Introduction. Some comments concerning recent taxonomic changes are given when necessary. Nomenclature follows different authors: Nowacki & Fibiger in: Karsholt & Razowski, 1996, Forster & Wohlfahrt, 1971, Koch, 1984, Ebert, 1994, 1997, 1998, Heath & Emmet, 1979, 1983 and the reader can choose which system to use. Readers can arrange plates according to the system they prefer and can also arrange their own plates. Moths figures can be displayed on screen all the same size or of relative natural size. Each species can be maximized on a full screen or displayed together with similar species. Many species are illustrated alive, in natural positions; where such illustrations are present they are marked on the species sheets. Each specimen has its own data label, which is hidden, but also can be easily displayed. Filters allow species lists to be arranged in accordance with the different classifications, alphabetically by genera or by specific names, by countries, by size and by seasons. For example, if you choose as a country Denmark, and as a season December-January, the nine noctuids known in this season from this country will be displayed automatically. Quick reference can be made to all the species inhabiting each of the countries included. It is also possible to view by country or for the entire Central European area, species 1.5 cm in size or below, etc. This, together with selection of wing or body shape, pattern and colour of the wings allows for quick and smooth species determination as the possible species are displayed. Species sheets include current scientific name with author and year of the description, figure(s) of the insects with size in mm and variations (the illustration of *Xylomoia strix* Mikkola, 1980 is missing), locality labels, synonyms and their source (for Central Europe only, mostly from the monographs quoted above), vernacular names, information for similar species, taxonomic comments, distribution by countries and distribution map, showing occurrence in the whole of Europe, not only in Central Europe and additional data when necessary: key characters, genitalia etc. One small drawback is that distribution is shown by whole country, so that the entire of a country where a species occurs is shaded. This does not, therefore, always give detailed information on the real distribution. In addition, a puzzle, a mind game and an identification quiz with different levels are provided for fun, testing knowledge and for relaxing in enjoyable way. The CD-ROM contains 507 MB and it is offered in a hard A5-sized box with instructions. Copies are available in English and German. To use this software, which is based on HTML technology, you need at least 64 MB RAM. It is best viewed with MS Internet Explorer version 5 or above. As software this program is extremely well composed and it is a real pleasure to use. All illustrated specimens are of top quality and all the photographs are excellent, so each species can be seen in details in real vivid colours on full screen. This product is strongly recommended to everyone, amateur or professional, interested in moths and particularly in Noctuidae. It will be useful to naturalists, students and teachers, and will be of help in educational programs by initiating in young people an interest in the wonderful world of moths.

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Zoologisch-Botanische Datenbank/Zoological-Botanical Database

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Autor(en)/Author(s): Beshkov Stoyan V.

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