

Nederlandse Jeugdbond voor Natuurstudie (eds., 1998): Voorlopige atlas van de Nederlandse zweefvliegen (Syrphidae). – 182 S.; Leiden (European Invertebrate Survey - Nederland) and 's-Graveland (Nederlandse Jeugdbond voor Natuurstudie). Without ISBN. To be ordered from Central Bureau EIS-Nederland, Postbus 9517, NL-2300 RA Leiden, e-mail: eis@naturalis.nnm.nl. Price f 12.50.

Progress in syrphid studies often seems frustratingly slow. Yet looking back over the last quarter century it has been spectacular, and many more projects must be ripening. In taxonomy many of the contradictory statements, lacunae and plain mistakes have been eliminated. The greatest leap forward has probably been made in zoogeography. One need only have a look at Séguéy's 1961 handbook, which summed up what had been published on the distribution of European hoverflies, to realize how little was known only a generation ago. The publication of a book like this atlas would have seemed an utopian dream.

But here it is. After Belgium and Denmark Holland is the third small country in Europe where a detailed account is given of the faunistics of local Syrphidae. Both contents and outward presentation can only be called exemplary, and excellent value for money! For each species there is neat map, a phenology diagram, often based on a huge number of data, as well as a verbal commentary: identification problems, larval biology, habitat preference, eventual changes in status, the latter often compared with the situation in adjacent regions. The maps are more detailed than in previous EIS publications: the territory is divided into 5 x 5 km squares, and different symbols are used for pre-1950 records, for captures in the period 1950-1980, and for the most recent records. Thus it is often possible to gauge changes in status, because each period is sufficiently documented. If few species have originally been described by Dutch authors, there has been a sustained interest in the local syrphid fauna for a very long time. And since van der Goot (who wrote the foreword to this atlas, and quite rightly so!) published the first version of his simplified keys the professional dipterists were joined by many amateurs, who were often initiated while members of the Youth Association for Nature Studies. If there had not been a small army of collaborators, how could the staggering number of 400 000 records have been assembled? Not all of these have been processed for the present edition (hence the word 'provisional' in the title), but an exception has been made for the rarer species: here all available data were used.

It is a pity that no provision was made for foreign users. The Dutch texts, which contain essential information, are not in the usual entomological jargon and may therefore be unintelligible to most. Yet the lay-out would have permitted to add a summary in one of the more widespread European languages. And everybody would have been helped if a number of 'background maps' had been added (climate, relief, soil, etc. as well as the location of the most important nature reserves, forest areas, wetlands, heaths).

These remarks do not imply that the atlas is of local importance only. Hoverfly enthusiasts will be eager to compare the faunistics of the species they are familiar with with the situation in the Netherlands. They will discover many interesting patterns, even though there are relatively few clear area limits. The latter can no doubt be explained by the uniform flatness of nearly the entire country. The importance of the relief factor is clearly demonstrated by the surprising number of species that occur only in the extreme south-east. The presence of a few modest hills as well as chalk and loess deposits demonstrably allows a number of species to survive, which are absent everywhere else.

What the maps do not show – and this is the weakness of the present system of limiting the information to national states with their artificial boundaries – is that these species do not constitute a homogeneous group. If the makers of this atlas had seen fit to add the available data on adjacent regions to their maps in some form, it would have been possible to visualize the complexity of the matter. Thus *Blera fallax*, *Eristalis jugorum* and *Cheilosia barbata* have arrived here coming from the higher ground to the south; *Pipizella divicoi* and *P. zeneggenensis* form an isolated pocket outside their main area; the distribution limit of *Cheilosia lenis*, *C. antiqua*, ... continues into

Belgium at roughly the same latitude (as do the loess deposits); *Platycheirus tarsalis* and *Cheilosia canicularis* e.g. do for some reason penetrate more to the north in Belgium.

It was not my intention to criticize the work of our Dutch colleagues by this remark, but rather to plead for a renewed effort to continue and extend the European Invertebrate Survey, with the stress on European, even if the result cannot attain the same degree of refinement as has been attained in this Dutch atlas. A plea for the collocation of the information which is available but widely scattered or kept in drawers, for the establishing of more national databanks which may be linked in a not too distant future.

To end on a more prosaic note: would the editors of a future re-edition of this atlas consider to present the species in alphabetical order, so much more convenient in a reference book. Unless of course consensus had been reached at last on the adoption of some system acceptable to everyone.

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