BOOK REVIEW


Odor is like beauty—much depends on the beholder. If this be so, the stink bugs are much maligned. They don't really smell all that bad. If not exactly the essence of old rose and lavender, the odor is not one that I find unpleasant. There are other true bugs, and not a few other kind of insects, that better deserve the sobriquet. Irrespective of how they smell, the Pentatomoidea merit the interest of entomologists—professional and amateur. Some species, such as the southern green stink bug Nezara viridula (L.), not only merit but command attention as economically important pests. Few insect groups of comparable size exhibit greater diversity of form and habit. While most are plant feeders, one entire subfamily, the Asopinae, is predacious. Plant feeding species live in habitats as different as tree canopies and soil. Many are highly host-specific species and others attack plants across a wide range of families.

With such characteristics it might be expected that the number of people actively interested in pentatomoids would be large. Actually, the number is relatively small and this must be attributed in great part to the lack of comprehensive literature of the kind that would enable an interested person to easily identify species and obtain knowledge of their biology and habits. Although the title indicates that the scope of this book is geographically restricted to northeastern North America (approximately a quadrant enclosed by 96° longitude on the west and 35° latitude on the south), it actually includes most of the species to be found in eastern North America and a high proportion of those of North America north of Mexico.

Forty-four pages devoted to literature citations provide ample evidence that, while keys and detailed discussion may be restricted to those species known to occur in northeastern North America, the author has drawn on the world literature where this relates to the biology and habits of pentatomids.

An interesting feature of the book is a series of tables which provide a checklist of species for northeastern North America, a selected list of faunistic surveys, species collected at lights, species collected in beach drift, and of those collected at elevations higher than 3,000 feet. Tables 6-8 will interest biological control workers as they list prey records for Podisus maculiventris (Say), P. modestus (Dallas), and P. seriiventris Uhler.

For those who wish to identify pentatomoid species 20 plates of illustrations consisting of simple, but excellent, line drawings greatly facilitate use of the keys. Unless you are a native Ilini, 22 pages of Illinois distributional maps (one for each of the 88 species) will likely fail to arouse great interest. Even so, reference to the maps is an easy means of learning how rare or common a species might be. The northward or southward placement of dots will also generally be indicative of a species' distributional range.

Unquestionably, one of the features of the book that will be most useful to the general reader are the paragraphs in each species discussion that relate to its life history, hosts, and natural enemies. These paragraphs will
include all information pertinent to the species without regard to the regional nature of the book. Certainly the book is a worthy companion of those published over the years on the insect fauna of Illinois by the Illinois Natural History Survey. It is a book that must be in the library of any North American student of the Pentatomoida. Other entomologists and even the general public will find it useful as a source of answers to the most often asked questions about stink bugs.—KEECE I. SAILER, Department of Entomology and Nematology, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611 USA.