

BOOK REVIEWS

PROCEEDINGS OF THE FIRST INDIAN SYMPOSIUM OF ODONATOLOGY. Edited by S. Mathavan. xiv + 226 pp. Department of Animal Physiology, Madurai Kamaraj University, India, 1985. — Price: US \$ 30.-.

This volume contains the published proceedings of the first symposium in India to be devoted entirely to the biology of dragonflies. It therefore constitutes a milestone in the development of odonatology in India.

The 24 papers on Odonata have been contributed by 39 authors and are preceded by a Preface by the Editor and by two Forewords: by Professor S. KRISHNASWAMY, Head of the School of Biological Sciences, Madurai Kamaraj University (where the Symposium was held) and by Professor B. KIAUTA, Chairman of the Standing Committee for the Organisation of International Symposia of Odonatology within the auspices of Societas Internationalis Odonatologica. These introductory articles are followed by a précis of the welcoming address by Dr T.N. ANANTHAKRISHNAN, Director, Entomology Research Institute, Loyola College, Madras.

Half the papers treat aspects of physiology, and half of these describe effects on larvae of insecticides. The remaining contributions report studies on ecology (5), taxonomy (4), reproductive behaviour (2) and larval morphology (1). Three new taxa are described: two species of *Ictinogomphus* and a subspecies of *Calicnemia miniata*.

The contributions vary considerably in quality and usefulness, but most add something tangible to our knowledge of odonatology. The inclusion of certain papers, however, leads one to suspect that not all have been exposed to rigorous peer review. An example is the description of the morphology of "all" larval instars of *Pantala flavescens* which contains the surprising statement (also illustrated) that each labial palpus of instar 2 (i.e. the instar immediately succeeding the prolarva) bears 4 setae and that the prementum bears 6 + 6. If this report is correct, it shows this Indian population of *P. flavescens* to be exceptional, perhaps unique, among libellulids so far described. It is also at variance with the findings of L. LAMB (1925,

Trans. Am. ent. Soc. 50: 289-312), a fact that the authors fail to mention, though citing Lamb's paper. Thus the reader's confidence in this article is less than complete. One would, in any event, have doubted the need to redescribe the larval morphology after Lamb's careful work; but there is no evident justification *either* for failing to mention so significant a departure from normality *or* for describing the larval morphology incorrectly. Some readers will be disappointed also by the paper on diel emergence patterns of four species in which the tables serve to tantalise rather than inform: because the findings are, again, remarkable (*all* emergence occurred between 05 and 07 hours, numbers were consistently small and standard deviations were invariably whole integers) one would wish to be given closer access to the raw data, and especially the times of sunrise at the study site.

Odonatologists in temperate regions will find the review by A. KUMAR of ecological and behavioural studies of the Western Himalayan region especially useful: it includes a section on patterns of seasonal development drawn largely from Kumar's own published work, to which many readers outside India may not have enjoyed ready access.

The book is robustly bound in hard covers, and is equipped with a handsome, stain-resistant jacket portraying a copulating pair of *Orthetrum sabina*. The typography and printing are uneven and, though usually adequate to allow diagrams to be interpreted unequivocally, do not do justice to some drawings (e.g. those of *Ictinogomphus* by R. RAM) and photographs (e.g. those on pp. 68 and 99).

These criticisms do not detract from the importance of this admirable publishing venture and the occasion it marks. The organisers, the authors and the editor and his staff are to be congratulated and thanked for having produced this attractive volume, and for having achieved its publication so promptly.

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