Book Notice

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This new tome is presented as a textbook of animal ecology. Actually it is an encyclopedic treatment of the autecology of terrestrial insects, especially those of economic importance. Within the limits set by the authors it is thorough, detailed, and it gives emphasis to the quantitative and statistical aspects of insect populations. Considerable stress is also given to the climatic and physiological phases of insect ecology. The main theme, expressed repeatedly throughout the book, is the "chance of the individual to survive and multiply." This is developed into a "unifying theory." Other approaches to the study of ecology are criticized for lacking a "unifying theory."

Attention is almost always directed to individual species or individual insects. Occasionally reference is made to similar work on other invertebrates and rarely to related work on vertebrates. However, ecological relations of individual insects are treated exhaustively. The authors are critical in approach, but tend to labor their criticism of points of view other than their own.

Concrete examples of each point discussed are profusely supplied, drawn largely from British publications, especially the authors' own researches in Australia. The senior author is affiliated with the University of Adelaide; the junior author with the University of Sydney.

There are nearly 800 references, largely insect studies, and all are quoted in the text. There is a combination bibliography and author index. There are over 200 illustrations and all except four half-tone pictorials are charts and graphs, for the most part assembled from published literature. Each chapter ends with a good summary.

The task performed by these authors is enormous. They have brought together a vast amount of the pertinent information on the ecology of terrestrial insects. However, this reviewer is not convinced that they have accomplished their goal "to build a wide and satisfying general theory of ecology". After a very brief introduction to the field of animal ecology the text is narrowed to the consideration of the distribution and abundance of insects. This would make a suitable title for the book.

As a textbook in the general field of animal ecology it would not be satisfactory. It would, however, be suitable for graduate students in entomology or those taking a specialized course in insect ecology. As a source book and guide for advanced students and professional entomologists concerned with ecological research on insects and economic problems of insect populations it is unsurpassed.

RALPH W. DEXTER