

Scarabaeus

A NEWSLETTER FOR THOSE INTERESTED IN SCARABAEIDAE

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This issue of SCARABAEUS includes the mailing addresses of the recipients of the newsletter who reside in the United States. We will update the addresses of scarabaeologists as changes are received (note some changes at the end of the list in this issue).

Also included in this number is a questionnaire, which we hope all will complete and return. From the responses we will extract pertinent information for publication in SCARABAEUS number 12. If you are currently involved in a project, and would like to examine additional material, SCARABAEUS may be your most effective means of contacting numbers of collectors, all with a single note. We would like to be kept informed about current research interests. We are also compiling a file of photographs of those who work with Scarabaeidae. If it is at all possible, we would appreciate a photograph with the returned questionnaire; if you are unable to send a photo, we would still like to have the questionnaire. In addition, we would like to thank our correspondents for the many favorable comments received to date.

MUSEUM FUR NATURKUNDE, BERLIN

by Brett Ratcliffe¹

The Museum fur Naturkunde is in East Berlin in the German Democratic Republic. This is an old and prestigious museum with enormous holdings in systematic entomology. Although these collections are becoming increasingly utilized by systematists, they have not always been so, and many entomologists (particularly in the United States) remain unfamiliar with them. I was enabled by the National Academies of Science of the DDR and USA to study at the Museum for one month during 1980 as part of an inter-Academy exchange program, and I returned again for a brief visit after the International Congress of Entomology in Hamburg last August. I would like to make several observations in the hope of increasing awareness of these important collections.

The oldest part of the Museum's collections date from 1716 when the Academy of Sciences began to obtain natural history specimens. The Natural History Museum, along with the University of Berlin, was founded in 1810 and housed in the main building of the University located on the

principal avenue running through Berlin, Unter der Linden. The large, ornate building now housing the Museum fur Naturkunde at 43 Invalidenstrasse was built between 1883-1889. Three separate institutional museums (zoology, paleontology, minerology) were maintained in this one building until 1969, at which time they were administratively combined and augmented by botany and anthropology. The museum today is a unit of Humboldt University in Berlin.

The conflict during the second world war very nearly destroyed all of Berlin. The Museum fur Naturkunde (as well as most of the art and historical museums nearby) miraculously survived the heavy bombings of 1943-45. The Coleoptera wing of the Museum was totally destroyed by bombs in 1943, but the beetle collections and library had been transferred to the basement just a week earlier and so were not damaged. The gutted shell of this wing of the Museum, as well as numerous shell pockmarks over the entire building, can still be seen today. For those of us unused to experiencing firsthand the scars of was, these reminders are unsettling.

The Museum has recently begun the massive job of renovation and restoration of its exhibits. Judging from what I saw during my last visit, the results are going to be spectacular when completed. During the process of renovation, the Museum is ostensibly closed, but scientific work with the collections continues by the staff and visiting scholars.

The Coleoptera collections increased greatly between 1880-1930, and most of the scarab material dates from this period. There are about eight million prepared Coleoptera specimens and approximately two million unprepared specimens. Holdings from Africa, China and Europe are the most extensive. Material from the Oriental and Neotropical regions are less extensive (although there is quite a lot of it), and there is a very little material from North America or Australia.

The Scarabaeidae occupy an impressive 1,775 drawers (of roughly Cornell size) housed in wooden cabinets, and number approximately 1-2 million specimens. Many of the older specimens have little supporting data. Types are located in the main body of the collection. Many of the older types and type series are "buried" in the collection and are not only in need of distinctive labels, but also of being recognized as types in the first place. Material is generally arranged by catalog treatment. Unfortunately, the unit tray system is not used because of the historical precedence and the great expense involved in starting such a system. Nevertheless, the collections are very expertly curated by Joachim Schulze. Mr. Schulze is the principal curatorial assistant to Drs. Fritz Hieke (Carabidae) and Manfried Uhlig (Staphylinidae) who are the research curators. Part-time assistants are also variously employed. I have never met anyone more willing to assist a visitor and expedite research on Coleoptera than these three very dedicated entomologists.

Needless to say, a Coleoptera collection of this size and importance needs additional curatorial and technical staff. Management of a loan program and visiting scholars would, alone, seem to occupy a disproportionately large block of the current staff's time. The Museum

fur Naturkunde suffers the same plight of virtually all University museums in the United States: that of inadequate funding and too few staff.

Many people are unfamiliar with how easy it is to visit the Museum There is often the assumption that, because the Museum is in East Berlin, there may be bureaucratic problems for western visitors. is not true. From many points in Europe, East Berlin may be entered by plane, train or auto. The best way to visit the Museum from West Berlin for a day visit is to enter East Berlin at Checkpoint Charlie on Friedrichstrasse. After clearing customs and paying a small entrance fee, proceed north on Friedrichstrasse approximately 100 meters to the first bus stop. Take bus #59 (Chausseestrasse) to Invalidenstrasse (about a five minute or less trip). After getting off at Invalidenstrasse, proceed about one block west to the Museum. Advance notice of your proposed visit is, of course, to be expected. For visits of longer than one day, you may wish to correspond with the Hotel Metropole on Friedrichstrasse; I have been told this hotel is relatively inexpensive. I was also told that the hotel can arrange a longer visit with immigration officials that might obviate the need for a formal visa obtained through a consulate before one's trip. It would be wise to plan in advance and confirm what the current regulations and prices are going to be.

I believe that the Museum fur Naturkunde has been an under-utilized resource in systematic entomology in the past. An increased volume of requests and queries at this time may prove a heavy burden to the small staff. I am hopeful, however, that the Museum's collections and the science of systematic entomology will both benefit greatly by increased awareness and use of these fine collections.

The Museum's address is:

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43 Invalidenstrasse
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I thank Manfred Uhlig for providing me with much of the information included above.

Systematics Research Collections, W436 Nebraska Hall, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska 68588-0514.

BOOK REVIEW

Moron Rios, Miguel Angel. 1984. Escarabajos. 200 Millones de Anos de Evolucion. Publication 14, Instituto de Ecologia, Mexico, D.F., 132 pp., \$40.00. Available from: Instituto de Ecologia (attn. Patricia Reidl), Apartado Postal 18-845, Delegacion Miguel Hidalgo, 11800 Mexico, D.F., Mexico.

This book is not a scientific treatment in the sense that it is a technical volume targeted for scientists. Rather, it is an example of science expertly distilled for presentation to the public at large. The slip cover states that the book is directed to the public and that it will be used by teachers and students at intermediate and higher levels. Scientists will also find this book useful.

The chapters are entitled (1) Morfologia, (2) Diversidad y Habitos, (3) Importancia y Utilidad, (4) Colecciones y Estudio, (5) Clasification General, and (6) Literatura Citada. A prologue, introduction, literature recommended, glossary, and general index are also included.

The first chapter provides a concise overview of scarab structure (both external and internal), a discussion of form, color, and strength (supplemented by many beautiful color photographs), and a commentary on the function of horns. Chapter two delves into the number of species of scarabs, the places in which they live, and gives brief, synoptic life history notes for Goliathus orientalis. Canthon humectus. Proculus mniszechi. Megasoma elephas, and Phanaeus mexicanus. The third chapter deals with importance and utility of scarabs. Excellent, although very brief, synopses are given on the relationships between scarabs and agriculture, forestry, and cattle raising followed by a broader look at overall ecological importance. Chapter four concerns itself with collecting and studying scarabs. It is accurate and up to date and will prove especially useful to beginners. The penultimate chapter gives a general classification of the arthropods that becomes increasingly detailed (down to subtribe where applicable) for the Scarabaeoidea. Each of the scarabaeoid families or subfamilies is then characterized as to form, numbers, distribution and habits with a concluding comment on how many taxa are present in Mexico.

The literature cited is by no means complete or even synoptic (nor is it meant to be), but it is a good introduction to the kinds of publications available on Scarabaeidae. This is particularly useful to non-specialists desiring a broad overview who may wonder where to start in "getting into" the scarab literature. There are 174 figures in the book, and an impressive 92 of them are in color! Most of the line drawings were completed by the author, and all the illustrations are excellent; the visual effect of the entire book is extremely pleasing. The volume is nicely produced on good paper although I feel the binding could have been more closely stitched. Considering its moderate size, the book seems slightly overpriced, but perhaps the many color pictures negates that particular criticism.

I endorse and recommend this book to anyone interested in beetles. Those interested in Scarabaeidae, whether amateur or professional, should seriously consider obtaining it. The book is in Spanish.--BCR

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RECENT LITERATURE

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