

## BOOK REVIEWS

MORÓN, M. A., B. C. RATCLIFFE, AND C. DELOYA. 1997. Atlas de los escarabajos de México. Coleoptera: Lamellicornia. Vol. I Familia Melolonthidae. CONABIO and Sociedad Mexicana de Entomología; Mexico, xvi + 280 p. ISBN 9680-7801-00-X. Paperback. 21 × 27 cm. Available from: Sociedad Mexicana de Entomología, km 2.5 antigua carretera a Coatepec, Apartado Postal 63, 91000 Xalapa, Veracruz, Mexico, for US \$50.00 (check or international money order) including packing and certified airmail.

The English word **beetle** means a member of the order Coleoptera, and the word **scarab** means a member of the family Scarabaeidae. The Spanish word **escarabajo** does double duty, meaning in its broadest sense **beetle**, but in its most restricted sense **scarab**. The authors of this book use the word **escarabajo** to mean a member of the evocatively-named superfamily Lamellicornia (having laminate antennae). The name Lamellicornia in most modern works has been replaced by Scarabaeoidea, following recommendation 29G of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature.

This is one of two books, the other still in preparation, which deal with the scarabaeoid fauna of Mexico. This one deals with the family Melolonthidae, and the forthcoming one will deal with the families Trogidae, Scarabaeidae, Lucanidae, and Passalidae. Most readers in America north of Mexico will not be familiar with the family name Melolonthidae, because the retrograde classification used in the USA recognizes only 3 families of Scarabaeoidea (Lucanidae, Passalidae and Scarabaeidae) and thus includes Melolonthidae and Trogidae as subfamilies of Scarabaeidae. In the classification used in this book, the family Melolonthidae includes subfamilies Rutelinae, Dynastinae, Trichiinae, Valginae, Cetoniinae, and Melolonthinae.

In English, some of the vernacular names for members of this family Melolonthidae are chafer, May beetle, or June beetle. The name chafer conjures up an image of a chunky, thumb-nail sized beetle with bright pattern or metallic coloration seen feeding on flowers of the family Umbelliferae, whereas the name May beetle or June beetle evokes a picture of a cylindrical brown beetle about the size of the last segment of a little finger, and sometimes attracted to electric lights in surprising numbers. Those names do not do justice to the magnificent Mexican beetles described and illustrated in this book. If you have not seen *Dynastes hercules* (70-130 mm) or *Megasoma elephas* (51-120 mm) alive you have missed something.

It is unfortunate that the name **dung beetle** is promoted in the USA for members of the Scarabaeidae. These Melolonthidae are not dung beetles: their larvae feed on roots of plants or in decaying wood, and their adults feed on flowers or foliage of plants.

This book has a diagnosis of each of the 110 genera of Melolonthidae known from Mexico. It includes a brief description and notes on habitat, distribution, and in some instances behavior, for 253 of the 1,040 known species. The distribution (by Mexican state) of the remaining 787 species is given in tables. There are 61 black and white illustrations of adults: most of them are drawings and many of them are of superb quality. Remarkably, there are 32 plates containing 253 color photographs, some showing living larvae or pupae, some showing adults in nature, most showing pinned specimens. A preface by Gonzalo Halffter, and prologue and introduction by Miguel Morón set the background (and show that the states with by far the highest recorded diversity of species are Chiapas, Oaxaca, and Veracruz). A bibliography, and systematic and thematic indices complete the book which is well-printed on glossy paper.

I look forward to seeing Volume II of this ground-breaking work. Volume I should serve as an inspiration and challenge to entomologists in Mexico (and elsewhere) to match its quality in publications on other families of insects in their country. Entomologists north of the border should note the event of its publication and buy a copy while supplies last. The next generation of the work must include keys to adults and genitalic illustrations to allow identification to the species level, but this will require a great increase in number of pages and will drive the price much higher.

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