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## BOOK REVIEW

**Grasshopper Country, the Abundant Orthopteroid Insects of Australia.** D.C.F. Rentz 1996. Pp 284. University of New South Wales Press: ISBN 0868400637

To a non-specialist reader the title grasshopper country may appear somewhat misleading as the book also covers cockroaches, mantids and stick insects. Although the term Orthopteroid includes all such creatures of orthopteran stock nowhere the author tells us the common features that link all such apparently diverse animals even though a chapter is devoted to basic characteristics of the group.

This 284 page book runs into 16 chapters illustrated with 425 colour plates, 150 black and white photographs and many drawings. In reviewing a book of this kind on Australian insects one cannot but make comparison with CSIRO'S revised (1991) book on "Insects of Australia". There is no doubt that the grasshopper country with its keys to Australian Orthopteroid genera and related technical notes would interest specialist readers. But general readers and even entomology graduates may find the book a heavy reading. The insects of Australia with its large line drawings, excellent lay out and easy to read style immediately catches and sustains the interests of non-specialist readers. The large number of colour plates and black and white photographs while adding considerably to the cost of the book perhaps add much less to the usefulness of grasshopper country.

Even for specialists readers the book is poorly refer-

enced. While this may reflect the poor state of knowledge of the Australian insect fauna, the author could have included at least some well known publications on the biology and ecology of these beasts from other parts of the world. For example the outstanding works of Roy and associates on mantids of Africa has been ignored altogether. Similarly the author could have done better than merely stating that "several species of grasshoppers and locusts are of economic importance and their biology and ecology is well known and documented". At least some publications on Orthopteroids from Pacific Island countries such as Papua New Guinea would have increased the usefulness of the book beyond Australian borders. No harm would have been done by the inclusion of Blattodea Study Group under the "Special Interest Groups" (p. 266-267).

Grasshopper country would certainly be prized by the few Orthopteroid enthusiasts in Australia and perhaps elsewhere. But I am not certain if amateur naturalists, beginners in entomology and teachers of entomology would be fired by it. Certainly pest control and agriculture workers would require far more information for their routine work than given in the book. The high cost of the book (about A\$90.00) may also turn away the most ardent admirers of the grasshopper country.

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