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Entomology - a guide to Information Sources

by Pamela Gilbert & Chris. Hamilton (1983)

Mansell Publishing Ltd. 237pp. £18.

This guide is intended to assist entomologists, librarians and information officers in finding a wide variety of sources and services relating to the subject and its prosecution. Curators of natural history museums could be included on this list. The general headings are on history, social connections (e.g. insects in art and literature), identification, collections, literature, societies and miscellaneous services such as translations, beekeeping, etc.

For specific information on identifying individual families, genera, etc., of insects on a world wide scale, the reader is naturally directed to specialised guides for that purpose. The Systematics Association's "Key Works" and the relatively new Animal Identification guides published by the BM(NH) are designed for just this purpose. For the British Isles more entries are given to identification references. However, the publications of the British Entomological and Natural History Society are not referred to here. It is interesting to note that most countries of the world have their national "Faunas". There is the Faune de France, Die Tierwelt Deutschlands, Fauna Japonica, etc., but what happened to ours? Has British compromise by which some works are published by Societies or government agencies, privately published and commercial ventures by amateur and professional alike, achieved the goal? We still have some groups for which keys are unavailable. Because the references in this section are arranged by countries there are a few anomalies. Whereas the "Moths of America north of Mexico, including Greenland" is given, there is no mention of "Microlepidoptera Palæarctica" or "Die Fliegen der Paläarktischen Region".

The section on "Entomological Suppliers" rather surprisingly includes Flatters and Garnett Ltd who went out of business in 1966. However, their stock-in-trade and trade-marked products were taken over by GBI Laboratories Ltd who still operate in Manchester though they advertise themselves on a very low key. A more upsetting omission is the lack of reference to the work of the Collection Research Units. The section on location of collections includes Sherborn, Chalmers-Hunt, Horn and Kahle but nothing of recent developments in this field. Under the heading of collection, curation and preservation, Wagstaffe and Fidler is by far the oldest reference of the ten given. (Although it is listed as published in 1970, this is only the latest reprint of the 1955 edition, unrevised. For some reason they are credited with three volumes on the preservation of natural history specimens though I know of only two). This reinforces the need for an update of curatorial techniques to be published.

I think I shall use this book on many occasions, for my own purposes and to answer enquiries from the public. Museums with natural history collections will probably find it a useful addition to their library.

E. G. Hancock.