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BOOTH MUSEUM CENTENARY, 1990

The Booth Museum of Natural History, Brighton, is to celebrate the centenary of its opening to the public in 1990 with a special centenary exhibition (24 March to 2 September) and various associated activities. The exhibition will feature many items never previously put on public display and will spotlight the Museum's past and present services to the local community.



Book Reviews

COLLINS FIELD GUIDE TO THE GRASSHOPPERS AND CRICKETS OF BRITAIN AND NORTHERN EUROPE.

by Heiko Bellman

Published by Collins, London, 1988.
Price £10.95.

The prospect of travelling across Central and Southern France during August and September had me a little worried. Not by the thought of Derek's driving (!) but by the potential lack of my usual beastly prey (carabids and diplopods). Thinking of what insects might be most conspicuous at that time we plumped for Odonata and Orthoptera spotting to pass the time. The new Collins field guide to the Orthoptera seemed a convenient introduction to this latter order so off I went to buy it; Derek used the Odonata book by Askew, a review of which will shortly appear in the Journal of Biological Curation.

A genuinely pocket-sized book, the Collins guide is ideal for taking into the field and although only available in hardback at present, it is good value at £10.95. Thankfully the original German

has been translated by Binky Ragge (with technical assistance from husband David) for those of us with only a smattering of 'Liebfraumilch' German.

As a complete beginner to bush crickets in particular I found the book a delight to use. Several options are available for quick and efficient identification. Firstly the photographs are really excellent (full colour of both male and female in most cases) for an instant initial ID. Secondly the key to species is very straightforward and easy to use in the field once you have caught the beast in question. Finally for a welcome confirmation of your suggested identification there is a further key to sounds and songs. Although originally sceptical about the usefulness of these song diagrams I soon found myself able to determine species with my eyes closed (a frequent occurrence!).

The descriptions of the 78 species included in the guide are very succinct, giving sufficient further detail to allow an accurate check on morphology, habitat, song and distribution as a final confirmation.

All in all the book provides a rapid means of identification for all of the species likely to be encountered in Northern Europe (except the unlikely *Mogoplistes squamiger*) and most importantly leaves one with the confidence that the identification is correct! Fairly short opening chapters on form, classification, life history, collecting, photography, etc offer a brief introduction to the Saltatoria, providing a ready background to enable any one to get straight out into the field with a degree of competence.

My only criticism of this very attractively presented field guide is that the photographs have been limited to two (occasionally one) per species when in some cases the different varieties of form can cause some considerable confusion. One or two additional shots of these would help the beginner enormously. Indeed on occasion the photograph is of a rather atypical variety instead of the 'standard' form!

Finally I would recommend this book very strongly to anyone considering any sort of insect hunting in Europe during the summer, though I have yet to try it in Britain. A very informative and easy to use book which turns a passing interest for Orthoptera into a passion. Meet a cricket twitcher!

Paul Richards
Sheffield City Museum
