

BOOK REVIEW

A Guide to Mosquitoes of Australia

Cameron Webb, Stephen Doggett and Richard Russell (2016)

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The general perception of mosquitoes is that they are a nuisance pest at best and a deadly public health risk at worst. These insects are carriers of deadly pathogens, causing diseases such as malaria that infect hundreds of millions of people globally each year. There are over three hundred species of mosquitoes in Australia and of these, only a small proportion pose a serious public health risk. Even though Australia has been considered malaria free since the early 1980s, there are still thousands of reported cases of local mosquito borne diseases such as Ross River virus and Barmah Forest virus each year. While Australia is currently free of many exotic mosquito borne diseases such as the Zika and chikungunya viruses, given the increase in popularity of international travel, there is a constant risk of such pathogens entering the country.

Written by three medical entomologists, this book covers a broad range of topics, such as mosquito biology, habitats, nuisance biting and public health risks as well as how to control mosquitoes around the home and personal protection measures. There is also a chapter on how to collect, rear and photograph mosquitoes. Extracts of interesting facts such as how far a mosquito flies, and why some people are bitten more than others are also included. The majority of the book is devoted to the identification of over eighty mosquito species. Each species is depicted by high quality photographs, and accompanied by a brief description. Information regarding distribution, habitat and pest status is also included. Most of us picture the mosquito as a pedestrian sandy brown colour, such as the Hexham grey mosquito which inspired the big sculpture “Ossie the Mossie” at Hexham in NSW. This book introduces us to several more attractive species such as the strikingly patterned *Aedes kochi*, the orange coloured *Coquillettidia xanthogaster* and the silver scales and orange thorax of *Tripteroides magnesianus*.

After reading this book, one cannot fail to be impressed by the ability of this insect to adapt to so many different environments, ranging from coastal to alpine regions and almost every type of aquatic habitat in between. Mosquitoes can be found in both saline and fresh water and even in polluted environments such as sewage treatment plants and urban runoff. This book is a valuable addition to the knowledge base of Australian mosquitoes. It is suitable for both the scientist and nature enthusiast, as well as those involved in environmental health. The practical advice on protective measures is useful to anyone with an interest in protecting themselves and their home from mosquitoes.

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