

BOOK REVIEW

A Field Guide to Spiders of Australia

Robert White and Greg Anderson

CSIRO, Publishing June 2017, ISBN 9780643107076 Paperback, 464pp, RRP \$49.95

There have been very few books on spider and most long out of print. None of these however, give any indication of the size or diversity of the Australian fauna but are very regional in their scope and reflecting the experiences of the respective authors.

Whyte and Anderson's book is different. Neither author is a professional arachnologist or taxonomist but their passions for spiders and their photographic skills are evident from the very first page. There are over 1,300 photos of live spiders and every family found in Australia is included.

The majority of spiders are Araeomorpha and a dealt with under that heading. Next is the Mygalomorphae, which includes the funnel webs, mouse spiders and relatives. Finally there are 30 pages dealing with those families no one ever sees.

There is a 45-page introduction with all the usual things needed in an introduction but there is an extensive section for the quick identification of some common families. This includes behaviour and biology aspects such as webs, burrows, egg-sacs, leaf-rollers and microhabitats as well as morphology especially eyes and spinnerets. A stimulating read especially for the beginner with lots of photos.

I have been lucky to have been able to read and comment on earlier manuscripts for this book. These have been a bit quirky in places and although some of this is it interesting, I am pleased that much, but not all of this has been bred out of the final version. It does not detract from the book, just different from how a taxonomist might approach the project. Read it and you will see what I mean.

There are many strengths to this book including the up to date classification and taxonomy and the inclusion of all recorded families. What will make this book successful is the large number of photos that truly represent the diversity of the entire Australian spider fauna. This will be the standard go to book on Australian spiders for years to come.

I have two criticisms with the book. Firstly there are colour tabs to quickly locate each family. These are poorly aligned which is a binding issue of the printer. The second issue I am still looking for.

Graham Brown
Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory
GPO Box 4646, Darwin NT, 0801



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