

## BOOK REVIEW

### Australia Beetles Volume 3 Polyphaga (Part 2)

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I have the pleasure of reviewing Australian Beetles Volume 3, but not without some trepidation as this seven hundred plus page tome is the third in a series of such an important group, of beetles, prompting me to more seriously evaluate the previous two volumes in the series for comparison and consistency.

The outstanding diversity of the Australian Curculionoidea, with 4200 species, is the primary focus of this volume. The volume also includes one subfamily of the Cerambycidae, the Lamiinae, in the 12 chapters of this book. It seems odd to include but one Cerambycid subfamily, however it certainly makes clear that subsequent Australian Beetle volumes are in preparation.

Of major importance to applied entomologists, specialist coleopterists and serious amateurs, the great scientific value of this work lies in the fact that for the first time complete and up to date morphological keys to all families, subfamilies, tribes and genera are available for the Curculionoidea. The coverage of the taxa in this volume replace, or are augmented by, the available species level accounts of (the incomplete) Zimmerman's 1990's Australian Weevils volumes. Incorporating up to date treatments, significant changes to the higher taxonomy and some generic concepts has been applied to the eight extant weevil families represented in this volume. Each family chapter provides a brief but concise nomenclatural history, an extensive morphological synopsis of both adults and larvae (where available), and a summary of ecological and biosecurity associations of the included taxa, all richly illustrated. Brief generic synopses include articulation of the type species and listing of all Australian species and their distributions. Remarkably, the many thousand of species of the Curculionidae are condensed to just 527 pages including text and illustrations.

This volume is extremely well illustrated with extensive high resolution electron micrographs, black and white illustrations and nearly 900 colour habitus and collection images that richly embellish the coverage of the target beetle

genera. The synoptic nature of this work however precludes any sizing metric in order to accommodate the large number of illustrations.

The keys are excellent and (some) were tested out successfully on a number of test targets by staff. The key characters are richly supported with illustrations making it suitable experts and non-experts alike. However on an operational note, the fine print, closeness of key couplets and length of ellipsis runs made using the keys for some a little challenging, (like me with sub optimal vision) without use of a ruler.

Each chapter is extensively referenced with many of the most significant and relevant taxonomic publications for the relevant Australian taxa. For a volume of such magnitude the indexing of taxa is valuable, necessary and comprehensive, however the use of emphasis attributes (perhaps bold or italics) within the indices to highlight important features like text sections or keys would greatly enhance the useability of the indices.

This particularly challenging volume is a testament to the tenacity & skills of the editors, authors and publishers in dealing with Australia's most speciose assemblage of related insect taxa. Like the *Insects of Australia* before, I am sure this series will be a landmark publication, standing as the long term reference text of preference for generations to come.

I feel that this volume is a must have for professional collections/collectors, biodiversity and biosecurity officers, keen coleopterists and book collectors alike.

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