

BOOK REVIEW

Roberts, M. J. 1985. The Spiders of Great Britain and Ireland. Harley Books, Martens, Great Horkesley, Colchester, Essex, C06 4AH England. Vol. I, £45.00, 229 pp. 100 textfigs., 1985. Vol. III, £55.00, 256 pp., 237 plates of colored drawings, 1985.

Besides a similarity in titles between Blackwall's great work and that of Roberts' there is also the similarity in page size, both being much larger than the usual. The 212 by 290 mm page of Roberts' is just about twice that of the usual manual size. The recently published "Spiders of the Britain and Northern Europe" by Jones, and the "Spiders of the World" by the Preston-Mafhans are each about half the page size of the Roberts' work.

In volume I the first 30 pages are devoted to spider morphology, followed by general information about spiders. The rest of the volume is devoted to descriptions of those spiders belonging to the 27 families: Atypidae to Theridiosomatidae. The description of the remaining family, the Linyphiidae (*sensu lato*) is reserved for volume II, due to appear in 1986.

Most of the keys are of the standard dichotomous type. However, the key to the families is not a completely dichotomous one, e.g., there are 12 alternatives in "couplet" 7, and four each in "couplets" 6 and 10. There is merely a statement of the chief characters for these taxa. Moreover, there is no key to the genera of Lycosidae, but rather a listing of the nine genera and the characters of each to be noted.

Interspersed throughout the text the author has included some "Taxonomic notes" from which the reader can see that the author is well versed in current and recent literature. For example, in these notes he explains why he does not use either of the names *Trachyzelotes* and *Urozelotes* both accepted recently by Platnick and Shadab. For the most part he does not follow Lehtinen (1967) but does accept the latter's generic name *Nigma* in the Dictynidae. The three orb-weavers, originally in *Araneus* (or *Epeira*) referred to by Emerton as the three house *Epeira*'s, but more recently shown to belong to *Nuctenea* Simon are by Roberts placed, following Grasshoff, in *Larinoides* Caporiacco.

For each genus a section is given over to "distinguishing the species," followed by a section indicating the distribution in the British Isles. For those spiders in which there are intraspecific variations in body size, carapace markings, and in genitalia, such as in *Pardosa*, the author supplies lengthy comments in his "taxonomic notes." There may also be an assortment of illustrations. All this, together with the excellent drawings should facilitate identification. Although most of these drawings appear as black and white textfigures of genitalia, three of the latter are in color, and some are of bodies, legs, and abdominal patterns.

In volume III all of the plates are in color. Most show a dorsal view including the legs of both sides, of one spider. But a few plates show at a smaller scale the bodies only of four different spiders. Accompanying each of these figures is an inked outline showing the spider's actual size. The plates 1-157 belong with the descriptions given in volume I; the remaining 80 plates are of the Linyphiidae. The author's stated intent is to facilitate identification of specimens and he succeeds admirably. Although the author is not an araneologist of long standing any Britisher using this fine work will find himself deeply in Roberts' debt.

B. J. Kaston, San Diego State University, San Diego, California, 92182.