Eberhard, W. G., Y. D. Lubin and B. C. Robinson (Eds.). 1986. Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Arachnology, Panama 1983. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, DC. 334 pp. (Price $25).

One of the most difficult tasks a reviewer can be assigned is the evaluation of a proceedings volume from a general meeting. There is no unifying theme in such a book except for the limitations on the membership of the sponsoring group (here all the papers concern arachnids, though insects are the real focus of at least two of them). The erratic quality of the short papers, many serving as abstracts of a more complete article published elsewhere, is particularly obvious when there has been no pre-presentation screening.

It will come as no surprise to those who have read several such volumes that a small number of the papers probably could not have been published in a reviewed journal. The less said about these efforts, the better. The largest class of papers consists of reports of the smaller byways and peculiar backwaters explored during the author's main research efforts, or first attempts by students, or, sad to say,

the same paper presented at the previous meeting, or the one before that, with a few cosmetic alterations. A majority of the papers in this volume, however, are interesting and valuable nonetheless.

Bleckmann (p. 19) presents an elegant analysis of the response of *Dolomedes* spiders to surface waves on water, showing how the spiders discriminate waves caused by prey and extract a surprising amount of information from them. For me, this was the outstanding paper in the volume.

New behavioral phenomena and new structures connected with them are reported in the papers by Coyle (p. 33) on mating in *Euagrus* (the males use a patch of spines that functions like Velcro™) and by Robinson, Robinson, Murphy, and Corley on egg-sac burying by *Nephila maculata*. These papers are refreshingly original and well written and illustrated. Edmunds (p. 61) uses a detailed study on the stabilimentum in two species of *Argiope* to review stabilimentum function and evolution in orb weavers in general, concluding, sensibly, that stabilimentum function may vary from species to species.

In the area of systematics and biogeography, van Helsdingen's (p. 121) survey of the world distribution of Linyphiidae provides an important data base and should set the course of systematic research in this neglected family for some time to come. Quintero (p. 203) presents a new classification of Amblypygi which may prove controversial but which is well argued and amply illustrated. Finally, Raven (p. 223) summarizes his new treatment of the mygalomorphs, the details of which have now been published elsewhere.

The editing of this volume, unfortunately, leaves much to be desired, but primarily on the technical side—there should have been more careful proofreading. It is particularly bothersome to have obvious typographical errors in the boldface titles of articles. For example, on p. 301, the word "Summary" is treated as if it were the name of the author of a species. On p. 320 we see "Hersilidae" instead of Hersiliidae. On p. 332, "Argiope bruennichii" is given as the name of a coauthor of a paper. Even in the table of contents one finds words like "umarobiid." Throughout there is erratic application of the convention of putting species names in italics, including one of the papers by the senior editor. A few of the illustrations (see pp. 183 and 186) are not of publishable quality but the blame here must be shared with the authors. An organization of the papers and abstracts into biological categories would have been preferable to publishing them in alphabetical order by the author's last name.

However, the price of the volume is reasonable and the majority of the papers are worth reading. Despite the several sour chords struck in the paragraphs above, I recommend that professionals in the field add it to their personal libraries.

I also recommend that in future such volumes not be published. The required limitations on the included papers, their erratic quality, the tanatalizing nature of abstracts that stand alone (and in several cases, as of this writing, reports abstracted in this book have not yet appeared, some four years later), are significant shortcomings. Add to this the difficulties of finding such "one-shot" volumes in libraries.

Of the three congresses or meetings I attended in 1987, the most valuable (a Smithsonian-sponsored conference on the evolution of terrestral ecosystems) banned the presentation of papers and instead organized the participants into overlapping working groups charged with summarizing the past, present, and

future of an area of research in an informal report. How much more refreshing and stimulating it would be if the participants in congresses and meetings simply discussed their current research in a less formal, more open, and speculative fashion, without the constraints of having to present a finished paper for publication. I vote for talks about research in progress, followed by vigorous discussion, rather than formal papers on last year's results!

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