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BOOK REVIEW

THE WASPS. Howard E. Evans and Mary Jane West Eberhard, with drawings by Sarah Landry. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1970. vi, 265 pp. Paper, \$3.45.

This pocket-sized book is indeed a high point in recent entomological literature. Concisely written, and including a remarkable amount of new or recently published information, *The Wasps* is essentially a comparative natural history of these fascinating animals. Only the "higher" or aculeate wasps are covered, a fact not clear from the title. After a brief survey of the Hymenoptera, five chapters follow: two on solitary species, two on social wasps, and a fascinating final chapter treating the diverse and often intricate biotic relationships of wasps. The book is generously illustrated, with 122 figures about equally divided between photographs and drawings; several photographs of tropical social wasps appear here for the first time. The University of Michigan Press is to be commended, as the book is virtually free of typographical errors, and the photographic reproductions are of the highest quality.

Many new or little explored areas of wasp behavior are discussed, including phoretic copulation, dual sex-linked mimicry, and the remarkable relationships of tropical social wasps with birds and ants. One interesting tidbit mentioned is the recent discovery that certain bats are important predators on some social wasp colonies. A major theme throughout *The Wasps* is the development of sociality among the Aculeata, and "the social ladder" presented here is of particular interest. A new and simplified classification of the nests made by wasps will also be welcomed by students who have struggled with the more cumbersome terminologies of other authors.

The enthusiasm and admiration for wasps shared by the authors is conveyed to the reader by the numerous delightful word-pictures sprinkled throughout; for example, there are the paper wasps that "terrorize housewives, ruin picnics, and build the large aerial nests that challenge fleet-footed stone-throwing boys the world over". A simplified, mostly non-technical terminology is employed throughout, but a two-page glossary is appended. It is somewhat distressing to find only a half page of suggested readings at the end, and an unfortunate omission is a bibliography of the numerous references cited in the figure captions and throughout the text.

Nevertheless, *The Wasps* achieves the rare distinction of being not only a highly readable popular treatise, but also being without doubt the best, and indeed the only synthesis of much recent literature on the comparative natural history of aculeate wasps. As such, it should be a required evening's reading for all students of insects, and a part of every entomological library. One hopes that it will not be long before the appearance of a similar well-organized, up-to-date synthesis treating that other half of the wasp world, the parasitic Hymenoptera.

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