



Tropical Deep-Sea Benthos, Vol. 23. Marshall, B. A. & B. Richer de Forges. *Mémoires du Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle* 191. 640 pp. Euro 99. ISBN 2-85653-557-7.

The world is full of ironies. On one hand, there is an increasing awareness of importance of global biodiversity.

On the other, taxonomic funding is scarce, and publishing taxonomic works is becoming increasingly difficult. In large part, whole-animal biology, taxonomy and systematics in particular, seem to have fallen out of vogue in the scientific community in favour of 'sexier' molecular biology. Ultimately, however, taxonomy underpins all biology and it is the ignorant who ignore it. Strangely, although 'biodiversity' is one of the best-known buzzwords these days; many, including those who promote it, forget that discussion of 'biodiversity' is ultimately vacuous without knowledge of species. Therefore, it is reassuring to find publishers who are aware of the value of taxonomy and systematics and are unashamed to be committed to its publication. One example is the Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle, Paris (MNHN), which for the past two centuries has published original research on whole animal biology. Over the past thirty years, the MNHN has published in its *Memoirs* series, the taxonomic results of the many deep-sea expeditions conducted in the Indo-Pacific by the Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD, formerly ORSTOM). These volumes, *Resultats des Campagnes MUSORSTOM*, rank among the most important works on the taxonomy of Indo-Pacific deep-water fauna ever published. The high quality of these works owes as much to the contributions of international experts as to the meticulous editing by former editor Alain Crosnier. From volume 22 onwards, *Resultats des Campagnes MUSORSTOM* continued as *Tropical Deep-Sea Benthos*. The present volume, 23, edited by Bruce Marshall and Bertrand Richer de Forges, ably continues the high standard of previous volumes. Nine

contributions are contained in 640 pages, authored by worldwide experts. Of the 226 species reported, 82 are new to science. The contents includes a study on Hexactinellida from the south-west Pacific by Tabachnick & Lévi; a survey of the Pycnogonida from New Caledonia, Fiji and Tonga by Bamber; a study of New Caledonian pleuronectiform fishes by Mihara; and six papers on decapod Crustacea. The crustacean papers cover hermit crabs of the genus *Sympagurus* by Lemaitre; hermit crabs of the genus *Nematopagurus* by McLaughlin; squat lobsters of the genus *Munida* from Fiji and Tonga by Macpherson; species of the pandalid shrimp *Plesionika* by Chan; species of pasiphaeid shrimp *Pasiphaea* by Hayashi; and species of glyphocrangonid shrimp *Glyphocrangon* by Komai.

A conspicuous feature of the studies published in *Tropical Deep-Sea Benthos*, and in the previous *MUSORSTOM* volumes, is the revisionary nature of the papers – most being major works, either revising taxonomic groups or providing regional synopses. The papers in the present volume are no exception, and for this reason many are benchmark studies. The contributions by Lemaitre, McLaughlin, Chan, Hayashi and Komai are major revisionary works. Others deal with regional faunas. Either way, they are major contributions to the knowledge of deep-water Indo-Pacific biodiversity. These papers are fundamentally alpha-taxonomic, but they contribute fundamental data for others such as phylogeneticists and biogeographers. The large size of the book and its individual contributions make for a potentially unwieldy volume. Therefore, a CD containing a PDF of all of the contributions is also included, enabling more convenient dissemination of the work.

Tropical Deep-Sea Benthos is available from: Publications Scientifiques, Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle, Paris, 57 rue Cuvier, F-75231 Paris cedex 05, email: diff.pub@mnhn.fr.

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