

BOOK REVIEW

The recent genera of the Caridean and Stenopodidean shrimps (Crustacea, Decapoda) with an appendix on the order Amphionidacea. L. B. Holthuis. 1993. 328 pp. ISBN 90-73239-21-4. Nationaal Natuurhistorisch Museum. Leiden, The Netherlands.

One of the most serious problems faced by a non-specialist when trying to identify animals he is not very familiar with is the scattered and often overwhelming literature he may have to contend with. This is especially so for a group which is being actively studied, with new discoveries and changes in their taxonomy being reported very regularly. It is thus very important that at regular intervals, this information is collated and presented in a user-friendly fashion for all other biologists to use. Unfortunately, this is a task few practising systematists like to do. Active taxonomists are always pushing ahead with making new discoveries, revisions, solving nagging problems or formulating new ideas. Few would want to undertake the very tedious and extremely boring (as well as relatively unchallenging from the academic point of view) task of compiling the published data for others to use. As such, we often see compilations of this sort done by non-specialists or even non-systematists, rather than by specialists on the group. This often results in quite lamentable work which serves more to confuse than be of real use, a fact which many a disgruntled specialist will no doubt hype about.

In the few instances when a specialist does undertake the onerous task of meticulously compiling such lists, the publication has often proved critical in further stimulating the field (apprentices now have a "bible" to follow) or greatly benefit other biologists. In 1955, Lipke Holthuis published "The recent genera of the Caridean and Stenopodidean shrimps" in *Zoologische Verhandelingen*, a paper which was to prove to be extremely useful at all levels, from professional carcinologists to ecologists in need of a quick identification. For a long time now, a revised edition of this valuable contribution has been eagerly awaited. The present successor to Holthuis' 1955 paper not only delivers as per all expectations, but exceeds its predecessor in usefulness and scientific value. In fact, it is not so much as a new edition but a quite different work!

In the 35 years since Holthuis' (1955) publication, much has changed, and this is obvious in the new edition. A detailed history is given of the higher taxa treated in the book, and all recent proposals regarding the classification of the Natantia are discussed. The chosen classification used for the book is perhaps the least "extreme" and most agreeable system that recently proposed by Chace (1992). Two infraorders are treated in detail, Caridea (with 28 families) and Stenopidea (with two families), and the single genus order, Amphionidacea, is also documented. A total of 310 genera are treated in the meticulous detail the author is renowned for. Illustrations are provided of each genus, usually of the type species. Although most of the figures have been obtained from published literature, there are also several excellent

Book review

original pieces. Primary synonymies are provided for every genus, and the etymology of almost every name (including junior synonyms and homonyms) is explained. The gender of each genus is also given, and this should go some way in eliminating the debate (and confusion) in using the right gender for species names. Erroneous spellings are also provided for each taxon. The surprising, or rather, shocking, result of Holthuis' compilation of erroneous names (which is almost like a hobby for him as he himself admits) simply goes to show how often such mistakes occur, even in modern times, and creates so much unnecessary confusion for laymen.

Of the 310 genera treated in the book, 117 had been described between 1955 and 1993, an increase of 38% since the first edition. This substantial increase reflects the intense research which has gone into the study of caridean shrimps over the last 35 years. It is also prudent to note that a good number of these new genera were the result of the phenomenal productivity of three key workers - Fenner Chace Jr., Anthony Bruce and of course Lipke Holthuis himself. In fact, Bruce's work is mainly responsible for the subfamily Pontoniinae (family Palaemonidae) having the highest number of genera (80) of any caridean subfamily.

I have no doubt that Holthuis' new book will have a significant impact on the carcinology as well as all disciplines which come into contact with shrimps. It can only be hoped that the same can be done for the other groups of decapod crustaceans (e.g. Brachyura) whose taxonomies have changed dramatically over the last 40 years.

LITERATURE CITED

- Chace, F. A., Jr., 1992. On the classification of the Caridea (Decapoda). *Crustaceana*, **63**(1): 70-80.
Holthuis, L. B., 1955. The recent genera of the Caridean and Stenopodidean shrimps (Class Crustacea, Order Decapoda, Supersection Natantia). with keys for their determination. *Zool. Verh.*, **26**: 1-157.

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