

BOOK REVIEW

The Chrysomelidae of Taiwan I. Lee, C.-F. and H.-T. Cheng. 2007. Sishou-Hills Insect Observation Network Press; Taipei County, Taiwan; 2007. 199 pp. USD\$20.00.

Taiwan's (Formosa) high insect diversity, ~20,000 species, has been explained by its geographic location and heterogeneous habitats. Systematic documentation of Chrysomelidae (leaf beetles), particularly by S. Kimoto and the late M. Chûjo, culminated in Kimoto and Takizawa's (1997) illustrated guide to the Formosan leaf beetles with comprehensive accounts of 700+ species. Now comes another excellent volume, "Chrysomelidae of Taiwan I" by Lee and Cheng (2007), which should have wide appeal for amateurs and professionals.

Lee (Ph.D., Ohio State University), a specialist on the systematics of Psephenidae (water penny beetles), is currently at Taiwan Agricultural Research Institute. Cheng (Master of Fine Arts, Boston University) is a professional visual artist who was driven by enthusiasm for insects and conservation concerns to create a nonprofit website, <http://sishou.artspacemedia.com>, to survey the insect fauna of Shishou Hills, a suburban hill in Taipei City. This attracted so many volunteers that Cheng and Lee were able to assign them specific aspects—collecting, observing, rearing, photographing, writing, and editing. The beautiful book by Lee and Cheng (2007) reflects the systematic expertise of Lee, the artistry and natural history interests of Cheng, and an unprecedented volunteer team effort.

The book is easy to use, with an image-based key to subfamilies and treats 100 chrysomelid species in a 1–2 page glossy spread each. Arrows or dashed lines indicate diagnostic morphology and distinguish closely related genera, e.g., *Crioceris* and *Lilioceris*. This photographic treatment permits easy identifications in the field with a pocket loop by both amateurs and professionals. A key with couplets is not as user-friendly in the field. A red ribbon handily marks pages of interest and host plants; beetle species are helpfully indexed. A few biological patterns e.g., cycloalexy, are given informative window treatment.

The expression "a picture is worth a 1000 words" very much applies since the text is in traditional Chinese but the high-quality photographs of live and dead specimens convey a wealth of information on habitats, host plants, immature stages, behavior, and morphology. Images of delicate colored specimens against black backgrounds would make wonderful wall art.

The authors' deep knowledge of native chrysomelid biology is evidenced by many "first reports" of immature stages (e.g., 15 of the 17 displayed cassidines show previously undescribed immatures) and unusual behaviors (e.g., the silk cocoon of *Ophraella communis* LeSage; fecal retention by larvae in *Ophrida spectabilis* (Baly) and *Podontia lutea* (Oliver)). Pupal cocoons (e.g., *Lilioceris formosana* Heinze) and diverse egg arrangements (e.g., *Oides decempunctatus* (Billberg)) beg for further research. The volume is an elegant model for anyone planning to prepare a field guide.

Given the current beetle-philia sweeping Asian nations, this series should sell well. All beetle specialists, not just chrysomelid enthusiasts or Chinese users, will benefit from its informed popularization of Chrysomelidae. An English version could certainly stimulate chrysomelid tourism to Taiwan.

Literature Cited

Kimoto, S. and H. Takizawa. 1997. *Leaf beetles (Chrysomelidae) of Taiwan*. Tokai University Press, Tokyo. 581 pp.

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