

CATALOGUE OF SPIDERS OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

By Jan Buchar and Vlastimil Růžička

Edited by Peter Merrett

349 pages. 21.5 x 29.5 cm. Hardback. Peres Publishers, Na Klikovce 9, 140 00 Prague 4, Czech Republic. 2002. US \$15.00. ISBN 80 86360 25 3.

This book is exactly what its title suggests: a database of all the spiders recorded from the Czech Republic up to 31st December 2000. The Preface gives a detailed account of the history of arachnology in the Czech Republic, which began in 1791 but did not really get started until the 1930s. There then follows a short chapter on the natural (geographical, geological, ecological) conditions of the Czech Republic in which are listed and briefly described the national parks (4) and protected landscape areas (24) of the country. Important spider collections are also listed. The preliminary chapters are in both Czech and English, which could be helpful to an English speaker wishing to read original arachnological papers in Czech.

The bulk of the book (c. 175 pp.) consists of database records of every spider species recorded from the Czech Republic. For each record the following information (explained later) is given: name, synonyms, map page, distribution, originality (of habitat), phytogeographic district, altitude, stratum (i.e. substrate), humidity, light, number of grid squares, vulnerability, habitat, occurrence, records (if only a few), and notes. Preceding the catalogue is a chapter explaining these concepts. Distribution refers to the geographical occurrence of the species outside the Czech Republic, e.g. Middle European, Holarctic, etc. Originality of habitat refers to a scheme devised by Buchar in which habitats are classified into one of four categories depending on how close they are to original habitats undisturbed by Man. Buchar was also responsible for delineating three phytogeographic districts within the Czech Republic, basically warm temperate, temperate, and mountain vegetation. Another scheme devised by Buchar is one in which spider life habits are classified by substrate (stratum) types: underground, on the ground, on vertical hard surfaces (rocks, banks, buildings), in the herb layer (up to 1 m or higher in the case of reeds), the shrub layer (>1 m), on tree trunks and under bark, and in tree canopies (>5 m). Abbreviations, handily also provided on a cardboard insert, are used for most of the entries in order to save space, but the habitat and occurrence sections provide one or two sentences giving more detailed information.

Just over 100 pages are devoted to distribution maps of every naturally occurring species, eight maps to a page. The maps consist of an outline of the country with major rivers and administrative divisions, overlain with the national grid, and records consist of a single circle within each 10 km square, open if recorded before 1950, closed if recorded later. A map inside the front cover shows the national parks and protected landscape areas, whilst the inside back cover has four maps showing: the national grid system, the total number of spider records in each square (maximum 383), the phytogeographic districts, and a larger base map of rivers and administrative regions (both unnamed). The last two maps are repeated on the cardboard insert. There is a comprehensive bibliography and an index of species records and distribution maps.

The book is similar in many ways to the *Provisional Atlas of British Spiders* (Harvey *et al.*, 2002) and to the more local *Spiders of Leicestershire and Rutland* (Crocker & Daws, 1996). The main difference from these works is that the descriptions are physically separate

from the distribution maps. In total, 830 species in 37 families have been recorded from the Czech Republic. This book is the culmination of a great deal of work by the authors in cataloguing this number of species. As explained on the endpaper, the Czech Republic occupies an interesting geographical position in the area between the southern limit of the polar, and northern limit of the Alpine, ice sheets of the Pleistocene. Moreover, it sits roughly in the middle of Europe. With this position, it is interesting to compare the araneofauna of the Czech Republic with that of surrounding countries and, indeed, that of the UK.

The book is well produced in a sturdy hardback, A4 format and, for only US \$15, it is a bargain.

References

- Crocker, J. & Daws, J. (1999) *Spiders of Leicestershire and Rutland*. Loughborough Naturalists' Club and Kairos Press, Newtown Linford, Leicestershire.
- Harvey, P. R., Nellist, D. R. & Telfer, M. G. (2002) *Provisional Atlas of British Spiders (Arachnida, Araneae), Volumes 1 & 2*. Biological Records Centre, Huntingdon.

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SPIDERS OF TUVA, SOUTH SIBERIA

By Y. M. Marusik, D. V. Logunov & S. Koponen

252 pages, with species list, maps, zoogeographical analysis, and reference list. 15.0 x 29.5 cm. Paper covers. IBPN FEB RAS, Magadan. 2000. US \$30 or Euro equivalent. Obtainable from Dr S. Koponen, Zoological Museum, University of Turku, FIN-20014, Finland; e-mail: sepkopo@utu.fi. ISBN 5-7442-1224-8.

For arachnology, the easing of political tension between the West and the Soviet Union in the 1980s provided the opportunity for a number of Russian and Western arachnologists to meet for the first time. The occasion was the XI International Congress of Arachnology, held at Turku in Finland in 1989. Until then, it seems to me, little was known about the state of arachnology behind the 'Iron Curtain'. However, it soon became clear that a number of Russian arachnologists had been beavering away for some years. Since 1989, catalogues and, particularly, taxonomic papers have been arriving thick and fast. As a result, the global distribution of spider species—especially when taken along with the Chinese contributions of a few years later—is now becoming much better known.

The present book provides a list of some 614 species from 23 families recorded from Tuva, a region of South Siberia bordering NW Mongolia, and more or less in the centre of Asia. For each species, relevant references, general distributional information, a map and, occasionally, notes on seasons of maturity and habitat are given. The zoogeographical analysis section contains, among other things, interesting faunal comparisons with other regions at similar latitudes worldwide and more detailed information about the geographical environments of Tuva.

British arachnologists will, no doubt, find the overlap between our native species and those of Tuva in South Siberia of some interest. Perhaps they may even be surprised, both by the overlap of species and in the climate.

All in all, this is a most useful book and the authors should be complimented for amassing so much detailed information.

John Murphy