

TABER, S. W. 1998. *The World of the Harvester Ants*. Texas A&M University Press; College Station, TX. xvii + 213 p. ISBN 0-89096-815-2. Hardback. \$34.95.

Steven Taber's book "The World of the Harvester Ants" is a breath of fresh air in a sea of otherwise dense technical literature. Taber obviously loves writing and studying harvester ants. The intersection of these interests is an engaging book written for amateur naturalists that is uncommonly easy to read, yet laced with details that even the most hardcore myrmecologist will find valuable. This book should be found in university, college, and public libraries throughout the western and southeastern United States wherever these conspicuous "red ants" occur.

Taber does a good job of summarizing the biology and ecology of *Pogonomyrmex* and *Ephebomyrmex* harvester ants using language that is accessible to virtually any lover of nature. As Taber notes, however, the downside of being brief and accessible is that this book does not provide a comprehensive review of the literature or a thorough description of what we know about the biology and life history of these ants.

The first chapter discusses Indian lore and other literature associated with harvester ants. The second chapter describes where harvester ants build nests and what they look like. Taber describes the trails and clearings around harvester ant nests and how some species seal off their nest entrances at night. In the third chapter, Taber discusses what harvester ants eat and how they gather their food. He also compares colony sizes of different harvester ant species and presents a history of Lincecum's hypothesis that red harvester ants intentionally plant and then harvest seed crops. The fourth chapter describes some of the interesting organisms that either eat harvester ants or live with them in their nests. The fifth chapter is an amalgam of topics ranging from pheromones and mating to chromosomes and oxygen consumption. The sixth chapter presents a cladogram of the morphological relationships among all *Ephebomyrmex* and *Pogonomyrmex* ants in North and South America. This cladogram shows a very clear division between *Pogonomyrmex* and *Ephebomyrmex*. Taber uses

this division to argue that ants in these two genera should not be lumped into a single genus. Unfortunately, Taber does not specifically address Bolton's lumping the two genera in his "Identification Guide to the Ant Genera of the World" (1994). The final chapter deals with the relationship between harvester ants and people and methods that can be used to control these ants.

Taber includes four appendices. The first is a list of all *Pogonomyrmex* and *Epebomyrmex* species along with the meanings of their Latin names, something I found very interesting. The second appendix provides a key and tips for identifying all of the harvester ant species. The third appendix describes the characters used in the cladogram and the fourth appendix describes a new species, *Pogonomyrmex snellingi*.

A major strength of this book is that it provides excellent distribution maps for all of the species. This is especially useful because distribution maps for the *Epebomyrmex* and South American *Pogonomyrmex* species have not been available until now. Furthermore, these maps are accompanied by good full-body line drawings of all 60 living species and one fossil species. Keys are also provided for all species, although users will find them challenging to use without a synoptic collection. This book also provides considerable information about the biology of South American harvester ants species that was previously only available in old, difficult-to-obtain, Spanish-language articles.

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