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HANSKI, I., and CAMBEFORT, Y. (eds.) 1991: *Dung beetle Ecology*. Princeton University Press. 513 pp. ISBN 0-691-08739-3, 60 \$.

This important book, to which no less than 15 authors have contributed, summarizes most of our knowledge about dung beetle ecology. It is divided into three parts: After a general introduction to the ecology of insects using ephemeral resources in patchy habitats outlining the evolution of the dung-feeding habits and other phenomena (breeding biology, biogeography), we find eleven chapters on regional dung beetle assemblages «aiming at a comprehensive, worldwide coverage». The last chapters attempt, as the editors wrote it, to synthesize much of the material into simplified patterns and working hypotheses on processes. Last, we have two appendices, 43 pages of references, an index to genera and another general index. A few black and white photographs, 14 maps and 85 figures are given here and there.

The editors, two well-known specialists of the group (HANSKI mainly of the northern Europe and Asia, Africa and tropical America for CAMBEFORT) have done a remarkable job, devoting their large experience and making a strenuous effort to give us what appears to be the best yet in taxonomy and ecology of the dung beetle. As the authors pointed out, the results presented in the volume are largely observational, based on trapping of beetles with baited pitfalls.

Among several data and most interesting assemblages, in chapter three, we have the extraordinary suggestion of CAMBEFORT that the Egyptian mummies would be no less inspired by the beetle's pupa of the *Scarabaeus sacer*! However, the sensitive scientist and well-informed author of «Le scarabée dans l'Égypte ancienne» (1987) will permit me to doubt his statement that the «pyramids (would be) idealized dung pats ...» But does this not lead to the path of sensitive science being closed to any formal views and laws?

«Learning», wrote a French author, «is penetrating into the heart of the knowledge.» This remarkable and entrancing synthesis of HANSKI and CAMBEFORT will permit us to approach what is known today about the dung beetle and where we have to go for new schemes and ideas. It is regrettable that this volume is published in English only as well as the relative rarity of its illustrations.

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