BOOK REVIEW


The third in a series of special publications produced by the Coleopterists Society, the “Illustrated Key to the Longhorned Woodboring Beetles of the Eastern United States” is a must-have reference for anyone with more than a passing interest in North American beetles and, in particular, cerambycids of eastern United States. I congratulate Steve Lingafelter on the publication of this important and useful work.

As with the Coleopterists Society’s previous editions of the Special Publications series, the box case and cover designs of the “Illustrated Key” are identical and rather spare, bearing only the title of the work, three images of cerambycids, and the author’s last name. Future publications would do well to include covers that also include the author’s full name along with the society’s name and special publication number to flesh out the basic compliment of information. Bibliographers would also benefit from the presence of a “suggested bibliographic citation” prominently placed somewhere on the back of the title page.

The spiral binding allows the “Illustrated Key” to lay flat while in use on a bench or tabletop, while the sturdy box cover allows for easy storage on a bookshelf. The glossy, heavy-duty paper is intended for withstanding a long-life of regular use and appears to be up to the rigors imposed on book pages held together with spiral binding. However, depending on the source of lighting, the glare from the shiny pages may be a bit annoying for some users.

The classification used in this book follows the checklist of Monné and Hovore (2006). It is divided into nine parts: abstract, introduction, acknowledgements, illustrated key to the longhorned woodboring beetles of the Eastern United States, species accounts and notes, literature and websites cited, plates, appendix with scientific and common names of hosts, and index.

Lingafelter notes that the “Field Guide to the Northeastern Longhorned Beetles” by Yanega (1996) is an excellent resource for identifying northeastern cerambycids. He goes on to point out that that the “Illustrated Key” includes most of the species in the Northeast found in Yanega’s work, plus all of the species that occur in the Southeast, as well as nine invasive species known or suspected to be established in the region. Yanega (1996) remains invaluable because it does include a few of the rare or restricted Great Lakes and New England taxa not included in the “Illustrated Key.”

In spite of the utility of comparing specimens to pictures for the purpose of species identification, Lingafelter rightly points out that keying a specimen lends a greater sense of confidence to the identification process, especially when dealing with species exhibiting morphological variation within its range. As someone less experienced with cerambycids, I can attest that using the key always encourages me to look for and learn suites of species-defining characters, whereas complete reliance on comparison of specimens with images is less exacting and can be hit or miss depending on the taxa and characters involved.

Lingafelter provides a very informative and useful morphological atlas detailing the external features of a generalized cerambycid. However, knowledge of cerambycid morphology is not needed to successfully navigate the key. The atlas is simply provided for general reference; specific features alluded to in most of the couplets are clearly illustrated with comparative photomontage images immediately adjacent to the couplet.

The author provides a map that clearly indicates the “confidence intervals” of the key reflected as a percentage of the species of select regions included therein. For example, the key includes 100% of the species found in the mid-Atlantic and southeastern United States, while only 90–95% of the species are included from elsewhere in eastern United States and adjacent Canada.

Of the 400 species of cerambycids found east of the Rocky Mountains (exclusive of southern and western Texas), the “Illustrated Key” includes all but 23 uncommonly collected taxa from the Great Plains and those restricted to the boreal regions in the vicinity