

Book Review

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Book Review

Ief Peeters. 2022. The Genus *Carabus* in Belgium (Coleoptera: Carabidae). *Phegea* 50 (Supplement): 1-260. 389 photographs. Format: 21 x 29.7 cm. Price: 55€ (www.phegea.org)

With this book, Ief Peeters fills an important gap in our knowledge of the European *Carabus* fauna. Richly illustrated with 389, mostly high-resolution, photographs, it highlights an impressive number of details on the ecology, distribution, systematics and conservation of all *Carabus* species found in Belgium. The book starts with a broad introduction to the genus including morphological considerations, reproduction, ecology, diet and evolutionary biology. Chapters 1 to 7 will be of interest to everyone, including amateurs, and is clearly written for such a general audience. Although these chapters are not strictly speaking focused on the fauna of Belgium, it is a nice summary of our current knowledge of the genus in general. Perhaps chapters 6 and 7 will appear more specialized to a broader audience, but they present an in-depth discussion of the *Carabus* fossil record and a review of what is currently known of the evolutionary history of the genus. Notes on and general explanations of the hybridization process are also an interesting introduction to this intricate topic rarely seen in monographs despite the ubiquity of this process in *Carabus*.

The second part of the book corresponding to chapter 8 represents the core of this monograph, in which all 17 species found in Belgium are highlighted in systematic order in a style that is still accessible to the layman. Peeters provides new data and summarizes information at the regional scale that will be of great interest to a more professional readership. The external morphology is presented in detail, although genitalic characters are not illustrated. The fact that accurate species identification within the Belgium *Carabus* fauna does not require dissection is likely the main reason why aedeagus drawings or photographs are not presented. The distribution of each species is broadly described, including historical data and conservation status. Although more precise localities could have been given along with type localities, the maps and geographic ranges presented, along with ecological data should be sufficient to find these species in the wild. All species treatments are

referenced with historical and recent literature citations, which is extremely convenient and not often seen in such books. A few pages of the book focus on introduced species, a major problem that is unfortunately not limited to Belgium. Interesting sections on nationally extinct species are also included, providing a discussion of the potential causes of regional extinction. Additionally, taxa incorrectly recorded as Belgian are identified. The discussion of individual forms and varieties will be of interest to *Carabus* enthusiasts.

Chapters 9 to 12 provide a brief history of insect collecting, a discussion on ethics regarding collecting, views on the causes and consequence of recent insect population decline, as well as conservation aspects. Perhaps some readers will feel that these chapters were not necessary in this monograph of the genus, but I believe that they nicely complement the presentations of the species and will hopefully inspire the youngest coleopterists to think about these issues when exploring the wilderness. Finally, chapter 13 is an interesting portrait gallery introducing some of the most eminent entomologists having contributed to our knowledge of *Carabus* beetles.

With this work, Peeters provides an excellent overview of the *Carabus* diversity in Belgium, but also a book that should inspire interest amongst the new generations of entomologists. This new monograph deserves a place on the bookshelves of professional and amateur naturalists alike, alongside other recently published European *Carabus* faunas, such as those of France, Italy and the Iberian Peninsula.

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