

BOOK REVIEW: Spiders of the Savanna Biome by Ansie Dippenaar-Schoeman, Stefan Foord & Charles Haddad

134 pages, paper back. University of Venda, Thohoyandou & ARC, Pretoria, May 2013; in English; cost R195.00 (= c. £14.00). ISBN 978-1-86849-421-7. Available from stefan.foord@univen.ac.za or dippenaar@arc.agric.za.

Written by three of the leading South African arachnologists, this is a compact book, but the nice design and layout packs in lots of information without the pages appearing overcrowded. Following a short foreword by Prof. Xikombiso Mbhenyane there are 12 introductory pages under the following headings: Introduction, The Savanna Biome, South African National Survey of Arachnida (SANSA), Spiders of the Savanna Biome and Spider conservation. In total, 1230 (including 308 endemic) spider species (in 381 genera and 62 families) have been recorded from the South African Savanna Biome, based on 24,000 records from 1260 localities. This book focuses on those families and genera that are most likely to be encountered, with readers referred to Foord *et al.* (2011) for a complete checklist.

The remainder of the book (apart from nine pages of glossary, list of further reading and an index) falls under the heading of: Where to find spiders in the Savanna Biome. Here, the families are listed by guilds according to their habitat preferences and predatory methods as follows: burrow dwellers, free-living ground dwellers, plant dwellers and web dwellers. As a result, the same family may have entries for different genera in different sections (e.g. Lycosidae: burrow dwellers, free-living ground dwellers and web dwellers [*Hippasa* spp.]) For each family there is a very brief introduction including the number of taxa known from the Savanna Biome (data not provided for Hahniidae) in addition to how common they are and how many of them are endemic, followed by the headed sections: Description, Behaviour, Further reading (sometimes these headings are used for multiple genera within a family). For some families several genera are described and often a key to genera (and rarely species) is also provided. For some of the larger families, e.g. Gnaphosidae the key is limited to subfamilies, whereas for some families there is no key at all (e.g., and not surprisingly, Salticidae, Linyphiidae and Theridiidae).

The book is packed with illustrations (mainly colour photographs of spiders in the field) on every page. While all of them are adequate for the purposes intended, some are of considerably better quality than others. However, this is hardly surprising given that they originate from many different photographers, as explained in the introduction. This book is an excellent example of how amateur naturalists with even a very basic digital camera can make valuable contributions to progress in arachnology. Not all photographs have a legend (even though in some cases there is ample room for one) and readers need to find where the figure is referred to in the text in order to see what it represents. In some cases this is rather confusing and frustrating. For example there are two genera of plant dwelling Hersiliidae (page 68) and seven photographs of spiders are provided, but there is no mention of which genus any of them belongs to; a key to genera would have been useful here.

The overall production of the book is good and it is printed on good quality paper. However, there are various typos and printing errors that should have been picked up at the proofing stage, although few of these are of any consequence with regard to understanding the content. Two of note include the misspelling of P[-r]etoria on back cover and also Selenop[+od]idae in the contents. However, both are correct elsewhere in the text. It would have been better to use distinctly different colours (rather than shades of red) for the figure on page 4, and the last sentence under “appendages” regarding scopulae is misleading.

I would highly recommend this book as an integral part of any comprehensive arachnological library, particularly as it covers a diverse fauna from a previously poorly documented biome. Although, it only permits very few spiders to be identified to species level, it provides an excellent introductory framework to this fauna and the references to take the identifications to species level if desired. The number and type of illustrations will make this a particularly useful guide for both amateurs and professionals to take into the field with them, and it will no doubt stimulate and facilitate further research on this fauna. Congratulations to the authors for producing a novel work that filled a distinct gap in the arachnological literature.

Reference

Foord, S. H., Dippenaar-Schoeman, A. S., Haddad, C. R., Lotz, L. N. & Lyle, R. 2011. The faunistic diversity of spiders (Arachnida, Araneae) of the Savanna Biome in South Africa. *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Africa*, 66: 170–201.

David Penney, University of Manchester.

Theraphosidae New to Uganda

by Richard C. Gallon

Back in February 2009, whilst searching through unidentified African theraphosid spiders at the Natural History Museum (London), I came across two specimens collected in Uganda by D. Bruce in 1903 (BMNH 1903-239). One of the specimens was a fragmented mature male *Pterinochilus simoni* Berland, 1917, the other a mature male *Phoneyusa bidentata ituriensis* Laurent, 1946. Both represent new species records for Uganda. It is also the first genus record for *Phoneyusa sensu stricto* for Uganda.

Unfortunately no specific geographical locality was given for the specimens. However, the known distribution of both species appears to follow the Congo Basin, so it is likely the specimens were collected in the western part of Uganda where similar rainforest habitat occurs.

It would appear that the collector of these two interesting specimens was Sir David Bruce, who was studying sleeping sickness in Uganda during 1903 (www.lshtm.ac.uk/library/archives/history/frieze/bruce.html).

Honorary Research Associate, Hope Entomological Collections, Oxford University Museum of Natural History, Parks Road, OXFORD, OX1 3PW.