

## BOOK REVIEW

KOMÁREK S. 1998: **Mimicry, Aposematism and Related Phenomena in Animals and Plants. Bibliography 1800–1990.** Vesmír, Prague 1998, 296 pp. (Distributed by Kabourek, s. r. o., Sokolská 3923, CZ–76001, Zlín, Czech Republic. Price not stated.)

No bibliography of the phenomena mentioned in the title has ever been compiled, and S. Komárek's work admirably fills the gap. The book includes brief introductory parts (general comments on the aim, scope and format of the work; a short discourse on the nature of the mimetic phenomena attempting to cast some doubts on the purely selectionist explanations by neodarwinists; list of some 115 abbreviations used in annotations and indexes), and two alphabetically arranged and separately numbered annotated bibliographies including 4767 references concerning animals and 471 concerning plants and fungi. The bibliography is concluded by many useful but idiosyncratically arranged indexes extending over 57 pages.

The core of the book are the bibliographies attempting to cover in full particularly the older and non-English literature which could easily fall in oblivion in the age of computerized retrieval of modern and mainly Anglo-American sources. The author has had to draw the lines somewhere – the vast subject would otherwise prove untractable or too patchily covered. The works on Batesian, Muellierian, Peckhamian and partial mimicry, aposematism, and the most extreme forms of crypsis are fully covered. Works on coloration and color changes associated purely with SMRŠs and adjustments to the environment, on industrial melanism and acoustical mimesis are excluded (the latter in order to avoid too abundant literature on imitation of songs in birds).

The annotations are accompanying all the references, and are uniformly structured, providing information on the biogeographical region, names and classification of the mimic and the model (if known), kind of adaptive coloration, and nature of the work. The indexes are extremely useful, cover a variety of aspects, and form jointly a large cross-referenced subject-index whose compilation must have been almost as time-consuming as that of the bibliography itself. The organization of indexes is unfortunately not self-evident and has to be learned; however, those who are interested and patient enough will be rewarded by a wealth of information not obtainable by other means. The major obstacle for an easy use of the indexes is a usage of too many abbreviations even in key entries, a shortcoming which could have been easily avoided by extending the index by a couple of extra pages.

What I miss is a simple glossary of major terms concerning mimesis and related phenomena; not all of those used do belong to the thesaurus of an average biologist; a few others could have been added to make the list nearly complete. Considering that the author has examined so many general papers and all comprehensive monographs it seems a pity that the works on the acoustic mimesis has been omitted completely; only the birds and mammals could have been excluded, and the literature on other animals covered. The phenomenon is infrequent (at least thought so) but often pretty bizarre and evolutionarily important. The same applies to ever more important subject of chemical mimesis (e.g., essential for understanding social parasitism in ants, wasps and bees), though, admittedly, a full coverage of this subject would require a cooperation with a chemical ecologist, and I would be at pains to approach it in plants and fungi. However, it seems to me that the author's passion for completeness has in the two latter cases overcome his awareness of utility (on the other hand, it seems cheap to criticize purposeful exclusions instead of prizing what has been done in full).

The author is to be congratulated for providing a unique, excellent, and reliable bibliography of mimicry and aposematism; it will become a fundamental and permanent source of information for all the students of these phenomena. I should like to emphasize three general points as well. First: Such specialized bibliographies probably cannot ever be replaced by any computerized databases since the compilation of the former requires enthusiasm as well as knowledgeable selection, rejection and evaluation of published texts rather than blind search for a few combinations of key-words which cannot cover the possibly important ideas and hypotheses published *en passant*. Second: Only through such an historically minded and linguistically unbiased approach the wealth of data and thoughts of our predecessors can be preserved, and both utilized and honoured. Third: Komárek's bibliography appears in a time when an interest in this evolutionary and ethological evergreen becomes a hot topic again. The reasons? "Evolutionarization" of ecology and ethology; advantages following from applications of modern cladistic techniques to old problems in comparative biology; realization of necessity of attempting to get rid of anthropocentric assessments of mimetism and aposematism; integrative trends in modern systematic biology (e.g., entomology *cum* ornithology relative to the significance of warning colours in insects).

I can only hope that the opportunities offered by this bibliography will be fully exploited.

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