BOOK REVIEW

Encyclopedia of Marine Bivalves; including Scaphopods, Polyplacophora and Cephalopods by Alain Robin. Jointly published by AFC (Association Française de Conchyliologie) and ConchBooks 2011. ISBN 978–3-939767–40-4. 302pp., A4 Hardback. Price 50 euros.

Published as a companion volume to the author's earlier work *Encyclopedia of Marine Gastropods* (see review *J. Conchology* **40**(1), 2009) and with the same format, this book has many of the strengths, and weaknesses, found in that work. It nonetheless gives some welcome, in depth, coverage of groups which so often receive scanty treatment compared to the more popular gastropods.

By way of the book's strengths one could cite the large number of species included, the worldwide coverage and the high quality of the photographic illustrations. Some 271 full colour plates, with a uniform black background, illustrate 66 species of scaphopod, 432 chitons, 1,538 bivalves and 26 cephalopods – including, unusually, a number of 'Cuttle bones'. Although chitons are mostly shown by single dorsal views, there are generally two figures of each species, with additional multiple specimens for variable species. Sometimes bivalves are shown with interior and exterior views, sometimes with exterior views of both left and right valves, presumably depending on the specimens available. In total there are 4,049 illustrations. I was puzzled at the apparent discrepancy in the bilingual publisher's 'blurb' on the back cover. "Près de 5,000 photos de plus de 2,200 espèces…." and in English "More than 5,000 photos of over 2,000 species...". After some tedious counting I can confirm some 2,062 species, which are illustrated by only 4,049 photographs. The statement of 5,000 photos is misleading, although even 4,000 illustrations for the groups concerned is still far more extensive than comparable works.

As one would expect, there is a bias towards the most popular families – scallops, thorny oysters, cockles and venerids between them account for 90 plates, one third of the book, no doubt reflecting both availability of specimens for illustration and also a 'market demand' for coverage of these groups. The specimens illustrated are, generally, of superb quality, though sometimes one would wish for more typical specimens to aid identification – I could cite the atypical specimens of *Dosinia exoleta* for example. It must also be said that there is a tendency for bright yellow colours to be printed with an unnatural green hue, particularly noticeable in the figured interior of *Politapes aureus*. There are a few omissions: no *Divaricella*; no *Thyasira; Hysteroconcha concinna* from the Pacific included but not the common, comparable, Caribbean *H. dione*. Overall, there is a good coverage, and no book can include everything so there will always be something missing in any general identification guide.

The weakness of this volume lies in the all too brief text, the caption for each figure being limited to the scientific name, size of the specimen illustrated and locality for the specimen illustrated. I would have much preferred a size range as one is never sure whether the size given represents a normal adult, a giant, or a juvenile specimen as in the case of *Eucrasatella speciosa* where an 11 mm specimen illustrates a species which as the adult reaches 90 mm. Similarly I would have preferred a broad distribution rather than the single locality given for each specimen. It is impossible to tell whether a species has a wide range or is a local endemic, to identify invasive species (*Corbcula fluminea* 'Australia'), or those which have been introduced for cultivation (*Venerupis philippinarum* 'New Caledonia'). There are no indications of habitat preferences, depths or substrates, or whether a species is commercially collected as a food source. Most annoyingly, no synonyms are given – *Mytilus zonarius* Lamarck, 1815, *Spondylus crassisquama* Lamarck, 1819 and *Cardium indicum* Lamarck, 1819 are well entrenched in all but the most recent literature as *Mytilys californianus* Conrad, 1837, *Spondylus princeps* Broderip, 1833 and *Cardium hians* Brocchi, 1814 respectively. Without the synonyms it may be difficult to relate species treated here to another book or to an old label with any certainty.

There is some inconsistency in the usage of authors names, though far less than in the

gastropod volume. Martens and von Martens both occur, and in one eight page section we find von Cosel used 12 times, Cosel 3 times and VON Cosel twice, in the latter cases von is printed in the larger type used for shell names and so appears as if these are subspecies 'von'. There are, comparatively, fewer typographical errors in this volume, *Poromya granulata* was described in 1839 not 1939, *Callocardia guttata* in 1864 not 1964. *Pedum spondyloideum* shown as an adult shell should probably be 100 or 110 mm not 10 mm. Similarly, *Perna canaliculata* at 30 mm and *Chromomytilys chorus* at 52 mm should probably read 130 mm and 152 mm – *Perna* reaches 170 mm, *Chromomytilus* 190 mm – though more seriously the figures for these species appear to have been crossed in any case.

Given the method of production of the book, that is borrowing specimens for illustration from over 40 private collections and relying on both identifications and data supplied with the specimens being accurate, there are inevitably errors of identification and questionable localities cited – though the author has consulted a number of specialists in order to mitigate this as much as possible. One specimen illustrated as *Chione subimbricata* – pl. 253, fig. 9 – is *Anomalocardia subrugosa* (compare to pl. 252, fig. 3) while the other pl. 253, fig 8 looks closer to *Lirophora paphia* though that would imply that the locality given is wrong. *Gari californica* (pl. 225, fig. 6) is the more southerly *Gari solida* (Gray, 1828). *Fimbria sowerbyi* appears to be a subadult *Fimbria fimbria*. The white *Sunetta* cf *scripta* (pl. 237, fig. 9) is the seldom illustrated *Sunetta solanderii* (Gray, 1825). The shell shown as *Tagelus strigilatus* on pl. 229 is surely the same species shown, correctly, as *Solecurtis strigilatus* on pl. 230. Regarding localities: Italy is an unlikely locality for the well known Indo-Pacific *Chama lazarus.* I have not heard of this as a Lessepsian migrant into the Mediteranean. While of the two depicted specimens of *Glycymeris longior,* one is reported, correctly, from Uruguay, the other, improbably, from Australia – where the species is not recorded in any literature checked.

The book concludes with a six page index, and here it is pleasing to find that, unlike the gastropod volume, both generic and specific names are listed – a huge improvement – although the print used for the index is still rather small. Given the limited information on sizes and distributions, and the lack of synonyms, this book needs to be used with some caution rather than treated as authoritative. It offers most to those already having a good working knowledge of the subject, who are able to 'interpret' the text. However, it will undoubtedly become a standard reference and deserves a place in any serious conchological library. At 50 euros it is modestly priced and can be highly recommended.

Together with the gastropod volume this gives a comprehensive coverage of marine shells unlikely to be surpassed – certainly in number of species covered – in the near future. I only hope that the format will be extended to provide further volumes on terrestrial and particularly freshwater shells.

Kevin Brown