

BOOK REVIEW

The Types of Carabidae (Coleoptera) in the Zoölogisch Museum Amsterdam, Predominantly the Collection "Oskar Vogt"

Arnold de Boer
Backhuys Publishers, Leiden, 2002
i-vii, 147 pp.
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I CAN'T RECALL WHY I AGREED to review de Boer's book. It wasn't just to get the complimentary copy and certainly not because the title suggested a scintillating read. A catalog of types, a little more enticing than the prospect of reading a telephone book. In fact after receiving the book I avoided my duty; first by placing the book on my desk in my office, then at home, and back to the office. It finally made its way to a table full of bits and pieces of projects and leaning towers of loosely connected reprints and files, and there it remained unopened, until it was satisfactorily entombed by the uniformistic forces of office sedimentation. An embarrassingly long period of time elapsed before my catastrophic reorganization eroded the piles and brought it to the surface once more. Then I realized I must fulfill my part, or return the book and remain chagrined. With the sort of self-deceptive craft we all employ in such matters, I made it the only item in my bag during daily train commute and I read.

At first, I did so dutifully. There is a short introduction that adequately introduces the magnitude of Dr. Oskar Vogt's collection, pertinent to this book are the 100,000 carabid beetles, though bulk of his collection consists of 300,000 bumblebees. The real gem in this book however, is the dozen pages that recount Vogt's life, "Biography of Oskar Vogt," and the 'life' of his collections, "Vogt's Entomological Collection." In these few pages, de Boer, with no excessive flourish, but exception writing skill, reveals a story of Vogt, placing him as a center point in an extensive network of people, institutions and specimens.

Oskar and his wife Cécile are brought to life as highly intellectual and driven people. As de Boer points out, the story has all the elements of "absurdist novel" or perhaps, I would suggest, a made-for-TV movie. Vogt's life spans both World Wars. Professionally, he was primarily a neurologist and brain researcher, but with a segue in and out of studies of hypnotism. All the while he was obviously driven, as collectors are, to amass thousands of specimens of bees and beetles. The study of variation was the ostensible reason for much of his collection and he related this, perhaps tenuously, to his professional research. The fabric Vogt wove in life allowed him to employ many people on various aspects of brain research and also kept them active at collection building. The juxtaposition of publications like the "comparative morphological study on male genitalia of carabids" and another "on the centre of musicality in the human brain," both produced by Vogt's institutional technical assistant, Dorothea Beheim-Schwarzbach, who later

became his collection manager, seems characteristic of the way Vogt got things done.

Though there is no evidence or claim of any impropriety by Vogt or any of his collaborators (with the notable exception of Breuning), there exists a certain inescapable tension that many of the characters in this reality story are right at the edge of propriety and that somehow building the collection was rationalized into nearly all activities involving Vogt. Good for him, I say. The notorious, specimen-pinching Stefan Breuning, figures prominently in this story, but I will leave details of that intrigue for readers.

In a short chapter de Boer presents notes on the life and collections for various authors of carabid beetle taxa of type specimens in the ZMAN collection. These bits of information are likely to be helpful to anyone trying to track down and identify holotypes and syntype material. As one might expect, these data on other people are not as well researched as the information on Vogt, and are certainly incomplete for some individuals. For example, no information is given for "L. Straneo", which is in fact Stefano Ludovico Straneo (1902–1997), whose collection is now housed in the Museo di Storia Naturale di Milano.

The major contribution of this book then is the list of taxa for all kinds of carabid beetle "types" in the collection—the vast majority of species being members of genus *Carabus*. It should be noted that this is a list of all possible and likely types, including definitively identified holotypes and lectotypes, but also possible syntypes, cotypes, allotypes and any other sorts of paratypes. The list does not attempt to make taxonomic decisions nor is it in the scope of the list to make lectotype choices. This is all very clearly explained. Each name includes information on its origin and taxonomic status, discussion of "type" material, full label data and remarks on the specimen condition or other useful information. All entries are clearly organized. Lists arranged by author name and classification, without specimen details. For anyone trying to track down typical material in carabine or cychrine, these would be invaluable information.

The book is well made with good binding and high quality paper. The taxi-cab yellow color of the cover will make it easy to find on the shelf. The catalog, as list of types, remains rather specialized and will only appeal to *Carabus* collectors or collections with significant holdings of *Carabus*. It is also a reference that should be available in any large entomological library collection. In addition, I would suggest that anyone who has an association to entomological collections, collects, and enjoys the way that specimens give us a sense of historical-connectivity, to check out the book from your library, if you do not purchase a copy for yourself, and read about Vogt and his collections.

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