

Editors' preface

Much of what had to be said in a preface was done so in the Editors' Preface of volume 1 and will not be repeated here. What follows is an annotation. There are two more installments to come, with volume 3 (Phytophaga) in progress and volume 4 which will cover special topics of morphology, natural history, and evolution.

The detailed family by family review of the groups of beetles covered in this volume turned out to be a challenging scientific project. The tremendous difficulty to find suitable authors for many chapters highlights a dramatic loss of expertise, which is in stark contrast with what gets published and discussed openly in the context of the ongoing biodiversity crisis, especially as it relates to systematics and taxonomy. Without the encyclopedic knowledge of an increasingly smaller circle of outstanding coleopterists, the completion of the 116 chapters of this volume would definitely not have been possible. The groups included are two recently described families of Adephaga (chapters 2–3) and the polyphagan superfamilies Elateroidea, Derodontoidea, Bostrichoidea, Lymexyloidea, Cleroidea, Cucujoidea and Tenebrionoidea.

Two introductory chapters are also included, one of which is an update on beetle classification, and the other a much-needed glossary of morphological terms. While classifications will change almost on a yearly basis due to new phylogenetic data, morphological terminology is an old calloused dog that is entrenched by tradition with many beetle specialists having their own sets of terms that are not used in other groups (the genitalic terminology of Coccinellidae is one example). During the course of editing and writing of the chapters the mix of terminology was frustratingly obvious, and not the fault of the authors themselves. Because homology is the ultimate scientific concept that underpins phylogeny and classification, the editors decided that a glossary would help to improve the communication among coleopterists and readers of the Handbook.

You will note that the editorship has changed since volume 1, a combination of editors that suit our expertise. In vol. 1, Rolf G. Beutel was lead editor because of his focus on Adephaga, and here, Richard A. B. Leschen takes lead as his work has been mainly on Cucujoidea. Then, it was decided to add John F. Lawrence for his broad expertise

on much of the Polyphaga, a knowledge asset that pushed volume 2 towards its logical and most successful limit. Meanwhile, Adam Ślipiński was also brought to the fold to assist with the management of Cucujoidea and as associate editor of Tenebrionoidea. Apart from chapter author and co-author, Adam, with the help of Anne Hastings, had managed hundreds of illustrations for many of the family chapters.

Since we had begun work on volume 2, several key coleopterists have passed away, among them Alistair S. Ramsdale (Montana State University) who had contributed elateroid chapters to this volume. Another great loss was the untimely death of the outstanding staphylinid specialist Dr. Steve Ashe (University of Kansas) to whom we dedicate this volume. He was advisor to Richard A. B. Leschen and supervisor of Marc A. Branham, who is one of our vol. 2 authors. Shortly before this volume was completed, Robert E. Roughley passed away; he was a specialist on Adephaga and was coauthor on the Gyrinidae chapter in Volume 1. Lastly we remember Hiroyuki Sasaji, whose main works concerned Cucujoidea and Tenebrionoidea, especially Coccinellidae, which are covered in this volume.

First of all, our greatest thanks go to the authors who have contributed to volume 2, without you coleopteran systematics would not be such a vibrant field of study and this project would have not been completed. Second, we would like to thank our institutions and funding agencies and naturally we would like to express our gratitude to our friends, colleagues, and families who supported us during the writing and editing of volume 2. We lastly thank Stephanie Dawson at De Gruyter by assisting with the overall editorial process and especially the final stages of proofing. Though Stephanie politely kept asking us about deadlines which were off by almost two years, she had to succumb to the nuances of coleopterists with patience and respect and we were happy to work alongside her in this demanding and large project.

Richard A. B. Leschen
Rolf G. Beutel
John F. Lawrence
Adam Ślipiński (associate editor of
Tenebrionoidea)