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Book review

PASSERA, L. & ARON, S. 2005: Les fourmis: comportement, organisation sociale et évolution. – Les Presses scientifiques du CNRC, Ottawa, 480 pp.

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Among insects, ants are remarkable because of their social life system. During the last century several authors, like Auguste Forel, Karl Gösswald, or Edward O. Wilson wrote syntheses about ants. The last one, "The ants" by HÖLLDOBLER & WILSON (1990), was published some 15 years ago. It is still a very important milestone in myrmecology, but during these last years the number of publications on ants has increased dramatically. Hence, even if you try to do your best, you will be missing some important recent papers on ant biology. Thanks to Luc Passera, from the Paul-Sabatier University (Toulouse, France) and Serge Aron, from the Free University of Bruxelles (Bruxelles, Belgium) we now have at hand a compilation of the most important works realized during the last 15 years. Of course one could object that the book is written in French. We can hope that the publisher will dare to consider an English translation.

Both authors are well known myrmecologists and their papers have been published in major journals. Their recent

book is divided in 17 chapters, some of which are dedicated to very actual questions like invasive ants (Chapter 15) and self-organization (Chapter 16). Each chapter represents a synthesis of the last 10 or 15 years, without avoiding important but older contributions. As noted in the preface by Laurent Keller (University of Lausanne, Switzerland), going through the bibliography (2300 references) reveals that most of the citations are very recent and you will rapidly feel that this book is not only made for specialists, but also for people willing to understand the state of art of today's myrmecology. The only negative point concerns the low quality of some pictures and figures.

The authors complement each other very well. L. Passera, emeritus, shows his great teaching capacities by starting each chapter with a historical approach as well as a handy sketch of complex questions. Chapter 2, presenting the controversial approaches of the origin of sociality is probably the best example of these qualities. Also the second author unveils great qualities, particularly in the chapter devoted to self-organization, a subject to which his compatriot, Ilya Prigogine (Nobel Prize of Chemistry in 1977), significantly contributed. Summarizing, the 480 pages book is easy to read and of great help to stay informed on recent ant literature.

References

HÖLLDOBLER, B. & WILSON, E.O. 1990: The ants. – The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 732 pp.