

What Wasp is that? An Interactive Identification Guide to the Australasian Families of Hymenoptera

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Source: Florida Entomologist, 90(4) : 798

Published By: Florida Entomological Society

URL: [https://doi.org/10.1653/0015-4040\(2007\)90\[798:WWITAI\]2.0.CO;2](https://doi.org/10.1653/0015-4040(2007)90[798:WWITAI]2.0.CO;2)

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BOOK REVIEW

STEPHENS, N. B, C. J. STEPHENS, M. IQBAL, J. T. JENNINGS, J. LASALLE AND A. AUSTIN. 2007. *What Wasp is that? An Interactive Identification Guide to the Australasian Families of Hymenoptera*. Australian Biological Resources Study, Canberra and Centre for Biological Information Technology, Brisbane. ISBN-13: 978 0 642 568519.

At first sight, a publication on the Hymenoptera fauna of Australia might not seem particularly relevant to the readership of Florida Entomologist. However, those readers who have experience with any of the CD-ROMs published by the CBIT, at the University of Queensland will know that these systems, whether for insects or plants, can make the process of identification informative and relatively simple. This latest system provides a means of recognizing the membership of almost 70 families of Hymenoptera, most with worldwide distributions. It includes 350 superb color photographs of at least one member each family, supplemented by a further 250 color photographs of structural details that are important to look at when trying to identify a member of this enormous and important Order of insects. For anyone responsible for teaching entomology, the extensive sections on classification, morphology, biology, and collecting techniques will prove a particularly valuable tool. All systems have their problems; there are people who still prefer to use a dichotomous key with line illustrations, but a multi-entry system such as that provided by the Lucid soft-

ware has many advantages. Certainly, the provision of clear definitions and illustrations of all character states used must remove much of the guess-work involved in the use of so many printed keys. In "What Wasp is That" the clumsy banner-headline on each page suggests that the compilers have limited experience of web design, and the reduction of the bees to a single family of wasps will not please many traditional entomologists. If any reader has yet to learn about the Lucid systems, a visit to Lucidcentral <http://www.lucidcentral.org> will be enlightening. More particularly, if you have never looked at "On the Fly", the companion CD-ROM to "wasps", then a visit to <http://www.ento.csiro.au/biology/fly/fly.html#> will be instructive and enjoyable. All of us use books with colored plates to recognize species of plants and birds. Given the enormous diversity of insects, CD-ROMs and websites such as these must surely be the way to teach future generations how to explore the diverse and fascinating world of insects.

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September 2007