

PREFACE

When I moved from California to Virginia some 14 years ago, I found myself surrounded by a beetle fauna that was at once familiar, yet exotic. Familiar because, as a scarab beetle specialist, I had more than a working familiarity with the scarab fauna of eastern North America and its literature. Exotic because most of the beetles in other families were entirely new to me. I took the opportunity to extend my focus beyond scarabs to include all families of beetles that occurred in my newly adopted state. Through fieldwork, macro photography, literature searches, and the examination of museum collections, I soon discovered that Virginia's coastal, sandhill, piedmont, and montane plant communities served as habitats for a tremendous diversity of beetles that included those with decidedly boreal or austral distributions. In other words, studying the beetles of Virginia was like taking a crash course in the fauna of all of eastern North America.

Several books became my primary entrée to the beetles of the region, including *An Illustrated Descriptive Catalogue of the Coleoptera or Beetles (exclusive of the Rhynchophora) Known to Occur in Indiana* (Blatchley 1910) and *Rhynchophora or Weevils of North Eastern America* (Blatchley and Leng 1916). *A Manual of Common Beetles of Eastern North America* (Dillon and Dillon 1972) was also very helpful. *The Beetles of Northeastern North America* (Downie and Arnett 1996) provided numerous keys for identifying species. The two-volume *American Beetles* (Arnett and Thomas 2000, Arnett et al. 2002) provided a badly needed taxonomic update for the North American beetle fauna supported with well-illustrated keys and extremely useful bibliographies. Much of the published taxonomic, biological, ecological, and distributional information for the species that inhabit eastern North

America is tucked away, however, among thousands of notes, articles, and monographs published in hundreds of departmental circulars, newsletters, peer-reviewed journals, regional guides, and various online resources.

Beetles likely make up nearly one-fifth of all plant and animal species found in eastern North America. Although beetles are frequently eye-catching because of their color, form, or habit, no one photographic guide covering species in all 115 families known in the region has been attempted until now. Most of the 1,409 species that appear in this work are quite conspicuous and found throughout the region, while a few are decidedly boreal or Floridian in distribution; however, it must be remembered that the species presented within these pages represent fewer than 10% of the entire eastern beetle fauna. As such, readers should not expect to find every species they encounter described among these pages; for example, typically rare forms excluded from this book may become locally common under extraordinary conditions. Still, readers using this book are likely to identify the majority of conspicuous beetles that cross their paths to the species level and should be able to reliably assign others to their appropriate genus or family.

The primary goal of this book is to present the beetles of eastern North America in an engaging format that is accessible to the amateur naturalist interested in beetles, yet authoritatively written to serve the needs of the professional biologist. I hope this richly illustrated book will increase the enjoyment of all interested in the natural world, serve as an introduction for students desiring to know more about beetles, and stimulate those who have already embraced the world's largest and most diverse group of animals as their life's work.