



Catalogue of Dictyoptera from Syria and neighbouring countries (Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Jordan)

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Abstract

This study is a catalogue of Dictyoptera (Mantodea, Isoptera and Blattaria) from five Eastern Mediterranean countries (Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Jordan). There are 75 species of Dictyoptera known to occur in these countries. These species belong to 15 families (eight of Mantodea, four of Isoptera and three of Blattaria). Mantodea is by far the dictyopteran group with the highest richness with 43 species occurring in this region, followed by Blattaria, with 21, and Isoptera with 11. Turkey is the place with the highest number of Dictyoptera (34%), followed by Iraq (23%) then Syria (22%), Jordan (15%) and Lebanon (7%). An analysis of accumulated number of species along time shows that most of this biodiversity was described during the 20th century, and that Mantodea is the group with the highest number of species described more recently. If this curve is taken as an estimator of the increase of diversity with new prospections, this indicates that the number of Mantodea in this region would be much higher than presently known. Conversely, the local richness of Blattaria and Isoptera are likely to be close to the present numbers, as the curves remain steady for about 100 years. An accumulation curve of species described with occurrence restricted to these five countries shows that most of them were described at the beginning of the 20th century. An analysis of the number of references dealing with each of these species along time reveals that Mantodea is the dictyopteran group most studied in all periods except the second half of the 20th century, when Isoptera was more cited. The types of these species are distributed in 29 institutions, but are mainly concentrated in four major European collections.

Key words: Mantodea, Isoptera, Blattaria, species list, types, Mediterranean region, biodiversity assessment

Introduction

The Mediterranean Region is widely recognised as one of the world's Biodiversity Hotspots (Myers *et al.*, 2000). Its wonderful dry climate with diverse but harsh soil conditions gave rise to an enormous diversification of plants, the group with the highest rates of endemism, but also amongst vertebrates, insects, and many other organisms. However, the Mediterranean basin biomes (Mediterranean Grasslands and the Mediterranean Forests) are distributed in many countries and comprises several biodiversity hotspots (e.g. Medail & Quezel, 1997; 1999), and the present knowledge of the existing biodiversity and its present status is quite dissimilar from one place to another.

Blattaria, Mantodea and Isoptera are large groups of worldwide-distributed insects with an important diversity in the Mediterranean region. However, at present time it is hard to have an idea of the number of species and of their areas of distribution because the existing taxonomic data is spread in hundreds of documents demanding a huge effort each time we need information about species' occurrences, or distribution area. So, as a first step to systematize the present knowledge on the distribution of these three insect orders along the Mediterranean biomes, we prepared a catalogue of Dictyoptera (Mantodea, Isoptera and Blattaria) in five Eastern Mediterranean countries (Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Jordan), and we analysed the evolution of the knowledge about these groups along time.

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