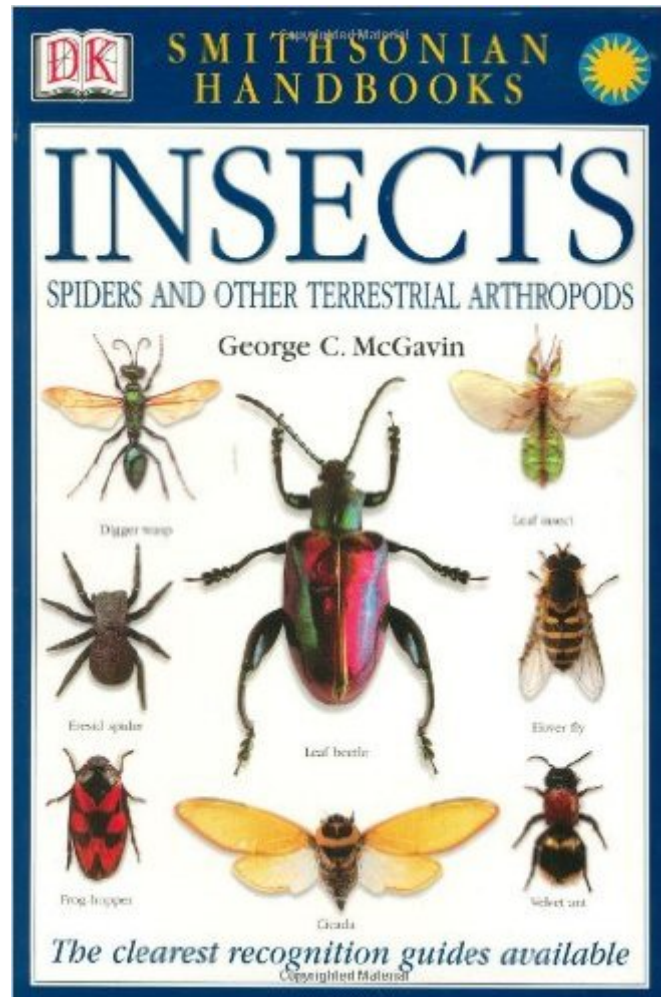


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Smithsonian Handbooks: Insects (Smithsonian Handbooks)



Synopsis

Smithsonian Handbooks are the most visually appealing guides on the natural world in the book marketplace. Featuring more than 500 full-color illustrations and photographs, along with detailed annotations, Smithsonian Handbooks make identification easy and accurate.

Book Information

Series: Smithsonian Handbooks

Paperback: 256 pages

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Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (51 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

This book has a lot of useful information about insects. It describes basic characteristics, life cycle, and much more. It also includes info on other terrestrial arthropods, such as spiders and centipedes. As a field guide, it focuses on families of insects, not species, which makes more sense because there are so many species that are hard to identify. There are great photographs and descriptions as well.

This is really a nicely done guide and almost fits in my coat pocket. The pictures are fabulous and the insects are divided up into their respective families with very clear identifying traits. I'm really impressed, so much easy-to-use information in such a small book. This would be a great precursor to an entomology class. Some of my favorite critters are in the Psuedoscorpion order and are the cheliferids and chernetids, both of which look like tiny ticks with claws. So very cool. I actually found one once in Washington state--in my kitchen! It was very, very tiny. I digress. A book like this is handy if you are always finding insects and wondering what the heck you are looking at. A good

value!

Mixed feelings about this handbook. It gives an excellent introduction to an enormous subject, and provides a manageable overview using Linnaean taxonomy (family tree), within its 250 pages. Its illustrations are clear and detailed and in glorious colour. Many of the bugs are absolutely beautiful. However, it recognises its own limitations by saying "... impossible to include [all 1500 families of terrestrial arthropods] in this book. We have chosen a broad range from around the world, including [those that] are particularly important, common or simply fascinating in some way". As a result, if you really need something to identify the creatures in the area where you live, then this handbook won't get you very far. For example, the entire world's Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths) are dealt with in 20 pages and the Odonata (dragonflies and damselflies) in only 5. Compare this with, say, the 84 and 21 pages respectively (out of a total of 320) in Bob Gibbons' "Field Guide to Insects of Britain and Northern Europe", which I found to be of much more practical use, simply because its scope is geographically far less ambitious. The Gibbons book won't help US readers, I know, but the comparison is likely to be true for any good quality LOCAL field guide. The DK/Smithsonian production is attractive and eye-catching, and could very well spark a youngster's interest in the subject, but it is probably more suited to the coffee table than to the field and the garden.

The pictures and details in this book are excellent; my children have loved it and found it fascinating. My only complaint is that I wish common names for the insects were included. It's a little tricky to answer with the Latin name when your 5-year-old asks "What kind of bug is that?" But I would say the book is well done, and while probably not organized or exhaustive enough to be a reference book if you were trying to identify a specific insect you had found, it is extremely interesting to use for learning about different kinds of insects in the world.

As a bug fanatic I was impressed with this book because of how well it is organized, all the pictures it has, and the way they present relevant information so clearly. They also tell you how to collect insects, what tools to use and other options, as in live or dead. I recommend this book highly.

The goal of this book by a respected entomologist is to enable the most frequently encountered insects to be very quickly and easily identified. It succeeds admirably in this goal of providing a "quick look-up" of all of the main insect body forms, allowing a rapid answer to the question "what is

this critter that I have just found?" Unlike many similar handbooks about insects, this small slim paperback is actually a serious reference work! This handbook displays excellent photographs of 1-4 representative species of insect within each Family (= "type") of insect, and these photos are well chosen so as to show what you actually do see when you encounter an insect. (other identification guides seem to include line drawings and photos that are not very helpful). The photographs of representative species for each type (Family) of insect are accompanied by several paragraphs of text that really do tell you the most important facts about that Family (group) of insects. The concise descriptive text accompanying the photographs is very clearly written, and it is easy to understand because it avoids difficult technical jargon. Even better, this descriptive prose avoids the common pitfall of over-simplification. This volume is a very well-organized and very well-written Reference Handbook by a learned person who has distilled his detailed knowledge in such a way that the general public can easily identify nearly any insect that is encountered. It is beyond the scope of this small handbook to enable the reader to identify insects at the species or genus level, but the book is a remarkable success on its own terms: it takes the reader only a short while to identify what type of insect is encountered and to learn some essential facts about that type of insect.

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