

Book review

Insect Pests in Tropical Forestry

Edited by MARTIN R. SPEIGHT and F. ROSS WYLIE. Published by CABI International, April 2000. 307 pages. Price £30. ISBN 0 85199 461.

This is an excellent book at a reasonable price. I liked the down-to-earth, factual and preventative approach of the authors. They have written a textbook on insect pests of tropical forestry based on their own combined 50 years of experience in many countries and on the now enormous amount of published information on forest entomology and related disciplines. The first chapter on tropical forests covers the questions of: what is, where is, types, socio-economics, food webs, pests, impact of insects, prevention rather than cure and book plan and sets the scene for the remaining chapters. These chapters cover: Tropical forests and insect biodiversity; Abiotic and biotic influences on tropical insects; Host tree/insect relationships; Tropical forest pests (ecology, biology and impact); Management systems I (planning stage); Management systems II (nursery stage); Management systems III (plantation stage); Management systems IV (Forest Health Surveillance and quarantine); and finally Integrated pest management. The authors rightly place great emphasis on integrated pest management (IPM) and the integration of all aspects of production to control pests and achieve production goals.

There are well-chosen figures and tables taken from the literature on almost every page, and 128 excellent colour plates that clearly demonstrate the point or show what the authors are describing — 'a picture can save a thousand words'. Plate 24 shows aphids that are difficult to discern. There are 30 pages of references that provide for the reader who wishes to research any forestry topic in more depth.

The authors illustrate all the topics in the book with examples taken from the literature. While this can leave the way open to the criticism that they missed some good examples, I believe that the choices they have made provide the reader with an excellent basis to understand the often complex issues involved. The examples they use

are from throughout the tropics and from many countries. There is only minor use of examples from more temperate regions when examples from the tropics are not available.

I had no trouble in sitting down and reading the book for periods of up to a couple of hours. The text is written in mainly non-technical language. There was some unavoidable but not excessive use of technical jargon. A glossary would have been useful for students.

The book contains a wealth of information for entomologists, students and readers interested in the technical aspects of tropical forest insect pests. It would also be of benefit to those who find themselves in the position where the trees are the problem and are looking for potential biological control agents.

I asked Craig Whiteford, a Senior Forestry Officer in the Queensland Environment Protection Agency, to appraise the book because of his forestry experience and non-entomological background. He was very positive about the book's readability, structure and usefulness and praised the figures and plates. He would have liked to see a glossary and more attention to community education, participation strategies and social benefits. Some figures could have had enlarged captions for the flick-through reader and a few more line drawings may have been useful.

The authors make the very valid point that trees are often planted without taking into account the potential pest problems associated with a site/tree species. This can result in the failure of the planting in the short term or greatly reduced yield over the life of the plantation. The book would help in addressing this problem provided it can be widely circulated. *Insect Pests in Tropical Forestry* is indeed timely in a world where we are rapidly moving from harvesting wild trees to planting timber plantations, where the better class of land is being taken over for agriculture and where trees are being used as carbon sinks.

Rod Elder

Department of Primary Industries, Queensland