

BOOK REVIEW

American Spiders. (Second ed.) Willis J. Gertsch. Van Nostrand Reinhold Co. 1979. 274 p. \$24.95.

The first edition of this book appeared in 1949, with the description of nearly 3,000 species of American spiders. After 30 years the author revised his fascinating account, adding numerous new black and white photographs, 32 fine color illustrations, as well as descriptions of certain spiders living outside the New World. The book starts with an overview of the life of spiders, their silk spinning, courtship and mating, as well as the evolution of spiders and their relationship to other animals. The major groups of spiders—the mygalomorphs, to which the tarantulas belong, the Dribellate, aerial, and hunting spiders are all described. There is a very interesting chapter on the economic and medical importance of spiders. The book is not only authoritative but also quite readable and entertaining, thanks to anecdotes, myths, legends and beliefs. In addition to entomologists and students of spiders, everyone interested in natural history will find this volume stimulating and useful. The glossary and index are short but sufficiently detailed. Gertsch is meticulous about his facts and data and his contribution will be a welcome addition to college libraries and to personal libraries. It will appeal to lay persons as well as to science students, young and old, learned amateurs and professionals, as a fascinating account of the largely ignored, often feared, strange and complex spiders.

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