

**M.J. Costello, C.S. Emblow, R. White (Eds.): European Register of Marine Species. A Check-list of the Marine Species in Europe and a Bibliography of Guides to their Identification.** Patrimoines naturels, Vol. 50. *Publications Scientifiques du Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris, 2001. ISSN 1281-6213, ISBN 2-85653-538-0, paperback, 463 pp. Price €40.21.*

This book resulted from an EC project, which had been running since April 1998 until March 2000. Another useful result of this project is ERMS website, which offers the major part of the book on-line.

The book offers exactly what it promises. The checklist includes scientific names of 29,713 European marine species. The list provides a valuable tool for everyone who has to check spelling or find correct scientific names without spending much time with a specialised and often hard to get literature. Especially to someone who wants to get the right and full scientific name of an organism from a group which is not his/her most familiar (i.e., hosts' names in parasitology etc.) this book will spare a lot of time and can prevent some embarrassing mistakes. Even for a specialist this book could make the work easier. The list is certainly a good starting point towards the unification of zoological nomenclature and clarification of anomalies.

The project covers all the continental shelf seas of Europe, from the Canaries and Azores to Greenland and Northwest Russia, including the Mediterranean shelf and Baltic Seas. The project encompasses species occurring in the marine environment, defined as up to the strandline or splash zone above the high tide mark and down to 0.5 (psu, ppt) salinity in estuaries (north Baltic sea with its brackish to fresh water is excluded). Actually deep-sea species are not excluded, but many areas of deep-sea environment are poorly studied and so the data are expected to be far from definitive version.

The book is divided into chapters on phylum or class level. Each chapter contains a short preface with an information about how the list was compiled, about the level of certainty and a short list of the key specialised literature. There were no strict limitations for the compilers, and so some introductions give more information than the others. The rest of each section contains a list of species' names. They are organised in taxonomic hierarchy ranks, each one laid down alphabetically. Index to orders, families and genera is included, of course, as well as the list of compilers with contact information. The amount of hierarchy categories depended on each compiler and so it varies in different sections.

All the included taxa are not covered equally. Fortunately, the book contains a table with specifications of how each checklist (approximately at the class level) is far from perfect. Checklists are arranged into 5 categories: "from preliminary list" to "checked by several experts in the group". The table also gives an information about the area covered and the category: "confident of reasonable coverage of all European seas, including Arctic, deep sea and Black Sea" is marked for almost all metazoan phyla. Lists of macroalgae and seagrasses are also included. However, protozoan checklists were not

originally part of the project. Many of them are included, but their quality is lower in general. Of the metazoan taxa, checklists of Rotifera, Brachiopoda (not included southern European species), Hirudinea, Chelicerata, Isopoda, and few other small taxa, have the lowest quality. The section that contains phylum Mollusca is a very special case. This part in book is a reduced copy of the CLEMAM (Check List of European Marine Mollusca) website (<http://www.mnhn.fr/mnhn/bimm/clemam/>) without synonymy etc. When you check Mollusca on the ERMS website you are fully linked to the CLEMAM page.

The book also includes a very useful bibliography of 840 identification guides (advertised, but not working on the website) organised by taxa. Another useful item would be the promised list of identification experts, which should include over 600 names and addresses. Unfortunately I was not able to find it in the book, nor on the website.

**Website.** The website, which can be found at <http://erms.biol.soton.ac.uk/>, is at least as useable as the book itself. Especially for a quick check of spelling its possibility of copying the names may be of higher value than the book. Unfortunately not all the parts are working properly; links to identification guides, Search, News, Help (and probably some others) are simply dead. The absence of Help is sad, because the page itself is not the user-friendliest one. On the other hand, the website offers some information not included in the book. For some taxa geographic and bathymetric data are available, not stated in the book in all cases.

The website does not state any introductions for each group, nor tables with the state of completeness for each list, nor lists of identification guides. This is sad particularly because including these very useful parts would cost just a little work and I consider these parts very important.

**Further development.** The Introduction chapter of the book promises that "This Register will continue to be updated, as new knowledge becomes available," but the last modification on the website was made on 29th February 2000. There was nothing done during the last two years, since the EU project was over and we must just hope that someone would carry on further. The above-mentioned CLEMAM website shows how the ERMS database should (and hopefully would) look in the future.

I expect this book (and its www version) to become a standard referential tool. At present there is no doubt about using this checklist. Everyone just should decide which form (i.e., book or www page) is more practical for him/her, but the best results are given by the combination of both.

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