

A Computerized Dictionary of Entomology

A Computer Database

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CONCEPTUAL INDEXES

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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

"Dictionaries are like watches; the worst is better than none, and the best cannot be expected to go quite true." —Samuel Johnson (1709–1784)

The success of a social species—whether it walks on 2 legs or 6—ultimately depends on good communication. To that end, prehistoric hominids invented spoken language; and ancient peoples, written. As the books from which the words in all others spring, rich with meaning, dictionaries were among the first forms of literature; and the progress of virtually every civilization on Earth has been reflected in and promoted by its development of dictionaries.

Likewise, the advancement of any given field of knowledge is utterly dependent upon mutual understanding not only amongst scientists in that field but also between them and those in all other fields with which they interface: Facilitating such unambiguous communication between entomologists and between entomologists and their interdisciplinary counterparts is the primary objective of this present work.

However, given the enormity and complexity of the science of entomology — and the intricate, often case-specific, and sometimes even self-contradictory vocabulary it has engendered (For example, see "mentum," "frontal suture," and the various forms of "social symbioses")—this is much easier said than done.

SCOPE

The work before you represents simply the best effort of its author to present in as coherent a fashion as possible a study of over 3,900 of the terms employed in a goodly variety of excellent, often classic references, representing the major

entomological subdisciplines (See the "Selected Bibliography" as well as the "Conceptual Indexes").

As a specialty dictionary, this work does not attempt to present all meanings for the terms included: Definitions and context presented relate reliably only to entomology (and, where specified, to the zoology of related invertebrates), and other meanings for many of these terms may be found elsewhere. The reader is encouraged to consult not only general dictionaries of the English language but also any of the widely available dictionaries on science and technology, biology, and zoology as well as any of the likewise excellent dictionaries, glossaries, and encyclopedias published for such specific topics as genetics or pesticides (In addition, the proper governmental agencies should be consulted for laws and regulations governing pesticides—this dictionary is not to be considered in any way legally authoritative).

Please note, too, that this abridged dictionary of entomology omits virtually all specific names, for people, organizations, pesticides, and organisms: Given the fact that an unabridged dictionary of the entire English language contains some 450,000 words but that there are over 750,000 described species of insects — each of which is identified by at least one binomial as well as a host of higher taxonomic names and often one or more common names—it should be appreciated that entomological nomenclature is a subject beyond the scope of this particular work.

One group of terms included herein is not

strictly entomological, although they are routinely used by entomologists (and other scientists), especially in coining new terms: Prefixes and suffixes, whose meanings—and shades of meaning—are as illuminating as they are useful. Students of "etymology" (the evolution of words) should take note, however, that some of the terms identified herein as "prefixes" or "suffixes" (such as "neur-" as in "neuron," or "-gaenic," as in "epigaeic") are actually "combining forms", used in forming compound words and more able to stand alone than true "affixes."

F O R M A T

Each entry is identified by a code—a "letter-number" (such as "a1" or "c123")—which is used consistently throughout the text entries, cross-references, and alphabetical and conceptual indexes and whose entry from your computer keyboard will be requested at appropriate times by the program accessing the data-base (See "Program Notes").

The spelling of each term represents either the standard spelling for that term or a common variation (in which case there is a cross-reference to the more common and/or proper spelling).

See "Key to Pronunciations" for interpreting the phonetic pronunciations presented.

Parts of speech are indicated (verb, adverb, adjective, or noun); and although conjugations of verbs are not included (They typically follow standard rules of English), plurals for nouns

(and for suffixes for nouns) are presented, especially because so many are formed in accordance with the rules of Latin (ex. "bursa" to "bursae").

Definitions are to be taken in an entomological context—that is, they apply to insects and only to insects, unless otherwise specified. Moreover, especially given the unsurpassed variety of insects, no definition should be assumed to necessarily apply to all insects, to most insects, or even to all or most members of any taxon specified (as in "In Diptera, this structure is..."): Consult entomological texts for assessing the applicability of any given definition to any given species.

Cross-references are included liberally throughout the text entries: Ultimately, virtually all terms can be defined in terms of other terms; and when prompted, entering the desired "letter#" for your next entry or pressing "Home" for your last entry (See "Program Notes") allows you great freedom to pursue your own "trains of thought".

Bon voyage!

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