

## BOOK REVIEW

*Carl A. Olson,<sup>1</sup> M.S.*

### *A Review of Entomology and Death: A Procedural Guide*

---

**REFERENCE:** *Entomology and Death: A Procedural Guide*, E. Paul Catts and Neal H. Haskell, Eds., Joyces's Print Shop, Inc. Clemson, S.C. 1990, 190 pp.

This manual is an excellent blending of scientific techniques and knowledge with criminal investigation backgrounds. It works at maintaining the skills and precision needed by the entomologist to translate rather gruesome scenes into worthwhile courtroom information, plus tweaking one's conscience with ethical and objective standards.

The editors have pooled a diverse set of authors and melded their expertise into a well-organized manual. They nicely introduce the subject and tantalize the reader with case histories. They provide enough details to keep the reader's attention but it is not overwhelming.

Having peaked the reader's curiosity, the editors plunge into the heart of the matter for entomology. This chapter could easily overwhelm part of the readership, but a lot of jargon and nonessential details have been pared, making it user-friendly. The detailed papers needed for actual investigations are cited for later use.

Next, the readers are led through the various techniques used to collect evidence, whether at the death scene, the morgue or the laboratory. For an entomologist this may be simplistic, but for detectives not trained in this science, it is the key to successful forensic entomology.

Throughout this manual, the authors have managed to relate scientific techniques under less than ideal situations, such as death scenes, in a light, straight forward manner. The illustrations keep the readers from developing too morbid an outlook on the subject, and may even elicit a laugh or two.

I found this manual to be very useful to me as a forensic entomologist. It helped me see the importance of meticulous organization of materials collected and presented to the entomologist, and the mental preparation needed to survive the courtroom.

To the investigators, it leads them nicely through collection procedures without the typical heavy-handed scientific techniques. Many investigators might get turned off by unreasonable demands for collecting bugs. Since investigators are keen observers, this manual takes full advantage of their skills, and leads them to possible evidence which could be overlooked by a non-entomologist.

The editors have put together a very useful manual, incorporating a wide variety of skills into a very doable and understandable science that should help expand the use of forensic entomology in the United States.

<sup>1</sup>Associate Curator, Department of Entomology, University of Arizona, Forbes 410, Tucson, AZ 85721.