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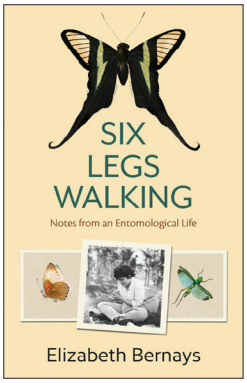
BOOK REVIEW

Six Legs Walking. Notes from an Entomological Life, by Elizabeth Bernays. Paperback, 2019, 175pp. Published by Raised Voice Press, Florida, ISBN 9781949259032. Price: £13.70



This is a collection of 18 short essays by the Regents' Professor Emerita in Entomology at the University of Arizona, snippets of her life from the age of nine in 1941 (chapter heading: *Small Wonders*) to the present (chapter heading: *Cups and Nostalgia*). She grows up in Australia, cutting grasshoppers in half to prevent them eating her father's vegetables, rearing silkmoths, and sending moths new to science to the National Museum at Canberra, setting plume moths, each wing resembling 'a minute ghostly palm leaf' and watching black and white Crow butterflies emerge from their pupae and fly 'off along waves of summer searching.' She learns to watch and observe things closely, with the patience to study over several days. She writes of her studies at Birkbeck College and her PhD on the musculature of hatching and moulting insects with Reginald F. Chapman, who wrote the book *The Insects: Structure and Function* and whom she marries. She provides an interesting account of locust palps that close at the end after feeding and open again when the animal is hungry; she sends off a paper to the *Journal of Insect Physiology* which was rejected as ridiculous and 'can't possibly be true' so sends it instead to the more prestigious *Journal of Experimental Biology* where it is received as 'exciting', 'novel', 'publish at once'.[1]

She writes about how she unexpectedly became a full professor with tenure at the University of California but with no funds, how she struggled for grant money, necessitating the self-advertisement that had always been anathema to her. She outlines her work on the theory that mortality due to predator action drives much of the evolutionary processes involved in the specialised affiliation of insects with their host plants – specialist feeders discover the best food faster and spend less time feeding, for feeding is a dangerous time when insects have reduced vigilance for predators.

This is a most interesting read, scientific discussion with the occasional diversion into personality and comedy – such as blonde Thelma at the London Anti-Locust Research Centre swinging down the long corridor calling out how she wanted sex with the senior scientist. Most of all, her patient dedicated passion for detailed observation of the minute interactions between predator and insect prey impressed this reviewer. I would have liked to see a list of her publications so I could follow up some of her leads but overall I thoroughly recommend this book as a light but informative read, fun and well written, a snapshot story of an entomological life.

ADRIAN SPALDING

[1] The Editor has had the same experience with the *Journal of Insect Physiology*, which rejected a paper which another journal accepted on the reviewer's advice as 'must be published.'