

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Tiger Beetles of Alberta. Killers on the Clay, Stalkers on the Sand** 2001 by John H. Acorn. The University of Alberta Press, Edmonton, Alberta. 120 pp. ISBN 0-88864-345-4

John Acorn has written a superb biology/field guide of the Albertan tiger beetles. It is "intended to be the first volume in a series about Alberta's amazing insects", and sets a high standard for natural history documentaries. The script is entertaining, anecdotal and passionate in places, and is abundantly infused with sparkling colour photography.

The Introduction gives a description of tiger beetles along with the intent of the book "... to bring you under the influence of tiger beetles and their cult of followers", and introduces people and places of the author's early collecting experiences. Among the six chapters that follow, the first two describe important aspects of tiger beetle ecology, and habitats in Alberta. Detailed taxonomic accounts for the 19 known Alberta tiger beetle species are contained in an extensive Chapter Three. The taxa are arranged in their natural groups; each begins with a general statement, and, for every species, a full beetle photo is followed by a common local name, (a practice avoided by most taxonomists so as to eliminate the creation of homonyms or synonyms, though I consider this a minor problem if the common local names are to be applied only to Albertan forms), latinized scientific name, pronunciation for the scientific name, identification, origins of the scientific name, classification, ecology, *Cicindelobilia* (assorted comments of field experiences and historical notations), geographical distribution maps, and various photos of adults. The remaining three chapters discuss the tiger beetle family and subgroup names, collecting and photography in the field, keeping tiger beetles in terraria, and a sensible plea for the protection and admiration of tiger beetles as well as other invertebrates in our ecosystems.

Two appendices, a checklist of Alberta tiger beetles, and an identification key to the adult tiger beetles of Alberta, and a glossary of terms, and references round out the remaining text. The final section, 'A Gallery of Tiger Beetles' depicting the Albertan forms 1.3 times life-size, serves as a quick identification directory.

The book is of a suitable size for fieldwork, and the sturdy binding and cover should stand up well to regular use. Throughout, the text is given in plain wording, and reliable science, and appears free of grammatical or typographical errors. By any measure *Tiger Beetles of Alberta* is an important contribution to our understanding of the North American species and their natural groups. It is reasonably priced, and will serve well the varied interests of professionals, amateurs and young collectors of colourful insects.

R. FREITAG  
Department of Biology  
Lakehead University  
Thunder Bay, ON P7B 5E1