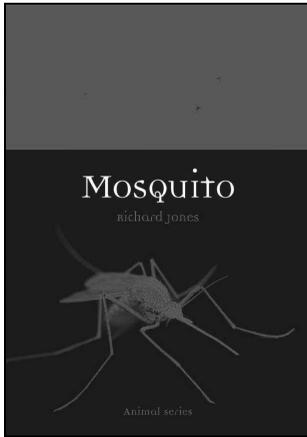


## BOOK REVIEW

**Mosquitoes** by Richard Jones. (Reaktion Books, London). Hardback, 216 pp, 94 illustrations, 61 in colour. Price £9.99. ISBN 978-1-86189-923-1



It seems appropriate to be writing this review for ‘Mosquito’ by Richard Jones on world mosquito day. On this day in 1897, the link between the malarial plasmodium and mosquitoes was first published. Our understanding moved into a new scientific era, away from misunderstandings of these creatures and the diseases they spread – “malaria” was a derivation of “bad air” – there was even one for water (mal’agua). This book is a potted history of the mosquito and its relationship with humans. No group of animals seems to cause as much nuisance to people, and this is detailed here, from

lamentations in early literature through to essays on the mosquito’s effect on military manoeuvres, agriculture and on human migration.

Jones does not bog us down with terminology and very loosely covers the taxonomic arrangement. Sadly this is the one part of the book that was incorrect as they have not been arranged as three subfamilies for a while now (as stated in the book) but instead just two, the Anophelinae and the Culicinae (the Toxorhynchitini are now placed here). However, putting this aside this is an incredibly informative book in a very similar vein to the others in this series (the *Fly* by Steven Connor is another). He has an easy writing style, often resulting in me guffawing due to some of the obscure facts that he sourced for us. For example, the Mayans thought that mosquitoes were spies, removing the secrets from their victims while they were draining them of blood! Little facts like that entertain throughout the book.

As well as the written component there are many illustrations throughout taken from various books, leaflets, public health posters and so on. These are very diverse in their style but the reader is more often than not left with the opinion that the mosquito is indeed a dastardly creature. The overuse of chemicals and the impact this has on the rest of the ecosystem is also discussed, with that chapter finishing on a worrying thought that although we seem to be understanding more about mosquitoes and the role they play, the actual information getting across to the public is diminishing. This is a theme raised often within the field and it is good to have this expressed here in a readily accessible book. Overall a very enjoyable read to introduce people to the incredibly diverse but important world of the mosquito.

ERICA McALISTER