

BOOK REVIEW

Ökologische Biochemie: by Dieter Schlee, Springer, Berlin, 1986. 355 pp. DM 118.

If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then I can only welcome this new German textbook, since it is modelled on my own 'Introduction to Ecological Biochemistry' the second edition of which was published in 1982. This text has 70 more pages and is much more expensive, but it does pack in more information. Also, space is saved on most pages by using small print for some of the points of detail. There are additionally many excellent summarizing tables and diagrams.

The book opens with a general introduction to living organisms and their metabolism and then there is a particularly full and up-to-date account of biochemical adaptation. A short chapter on allelopathy is followed by two on plant-animal and plant-microbial interactions. Then there is a long chapter on animal-animal interactions, with details of pigments, bioluminescence, pheromones and toxins. The last chapter is a brief account of symbiosis.

Like any work of this type crossing several disciplines, there are bound to be some errors of detail. It is unfortunate, for example, that recent chemical studies on host-specific toxins are not reflected in these pages. *Helminthosporoide*, the toxin(s) of *Helminthosporium sacchari*, is still given the wrong formula, although corrected structures were worked out in 1982. Also the author has relied on a 1926 reference for a report of quercitrin in the Marbled White butterfly, in spite of the fact that Morris and Thomson showed in 1963 that this insect sequesters flavones, not flavonols, from its larval food plant. There are a few other errors as well, but generally they do not detract from the value of this book. There is an excellent 40 page reference section, where literature references usefully include the titles of papers. Although there is an adequate general index, the absence of an organism index is regrettable.

Plant Science Laboratories,
University of Reading

JEFFREY B. HARBORNE