FACULTY OF SCIENCE
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Supervisor's evaluation of Sylvain Delabye's doctoral dissertation

The PhD thesis of Sylvain Delabye focuses on diversity of moths and butterflies in tropical Africa, combining ecological studies along various scales with faunistic and taxonomic contributions. Altogether it consists of a brief introduction, 8 chapters (mostly published papers, only a single manuscript is before its submission) combining ecological, taxonomical and conservation research, and a summary. Some parts of introduction and summary would surely appreciate a bit more attention to better summarise the comprehensive available knowledge and to put the thesis results into a broader context. Nevertheless, this can be said about many theses and both chapters are of enough quality to frame the other thesis chapters. **Altogether, I am very glad to recommend Sylvain Delabye's doctoral thesis for defence.**

When Sylvain joined our group, he already was an experienced entomologist with a strong passion for moths. After all, one of his chapters (Chapter V) came from his master studies. Therefore, there was not much what I could teach him about 'classical' entomological work, both in the field and lab, and Sylvain has immediately become an important member of our team involved in all our projects. During the years, he has spent many months in the field helping with many projects, including those which did not make it into his thesis. Finally, he co-led (with another PhD student) two expeditions to Cameroon, and fully led an expedition to South Africa. Whenever he was not in the field, he spent hundreds and thousands of hours in his office or in collections of our collaborating museums by mounting, dissecting and identifying moths. Without such dedicated work of the enthusiastic insect freak, many our projects would take much longer (if they would be finalised at all...).

Nevertheless, Sylvain's experience with ecological studies had been a bit naïve. Maybe if he would expect that the PhD within ecological projects demands so many hypotheses, their testing, results interpretation, and mainly compiling all of these into papers, who knows whether there would be a chance to assess this thesis... As a typical entomologist, Sylvain can be obsessive for details and can hardly be satisfied with any imperfections. I admire such characteristic, unless it leads to never-ending re-analysing of any single question, or to very obsessive restructuring of already finalised texts. Often, it has been difficult to explain that no statistics can be perfect and that not each reviewer (or co-author) is right in all criticism. In such cases, Sylvain's perfectionism trapped him in long months of paralysis when he suffered by staring at R scripts or paragraphs of text, instead of enjoying his work with insects. Despite all of these, the thesis apparently combines the high-quality ecological studies with the interesting biodiversity reports, clearly evidencing that Sylvain has won his battle with ecology (and hopefully has kept his enthusiasm for it).

Obviously, Sylvain has overcome all these troubles and finalised this thesis. I strongly respect he has never lost his specific (and often self-ironic) sense of humour, even during the toughest moments. Not only for this, it has always been the real pleasure to be together in the field. Our discussions on insects taught me a lot, and I hope my supervision gave something to Sylvain as well. In conclusion, I have really enjoyed having Sylvain in the group and watching his enthusiasm for work with the "grey salad" how he often calls our samples of moths or other insects.

Sylvain, good luck with your defence, as well as with your future career, hopefully full of insects!

In Prague, 19th February 2021

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