

# Preface and acknowledgements

This project began in 2002, shortly after I joined CSIRO Entomology. What new research directions would draw on my expertise in beetle systematics, and also be relevant to the Australian fauna? Ladybird beetles (Coccinellidae) were the obvious choice, given my previous interests in the superfamily Cucujoidea, the evident richness of Coccinellidae in Australia and the lack of contemporary knowledge of the family. This idea was welcomed and graciously supported over the years by CSIRO (appropriation funds) and the Australian Biological Resources Study (three research grants). The funding facilitated my research, the field trips and the extensive technical support that finally led to this publication, and to the parallel development of the Internet-based resource 'Ladybirds of Australia' (Ślipiński, Hastings & Boyd, in preparation), to be launched in late 2007.

Having embarked on this journey and begun serious study of Australian genera and species, I soon realised that the existing systematic framework in Coccinellidae was outdated, fragmented and based exclusively on the Northern Hemisphere taxa with little or no relevance to the Australian fauna. This situation prompted my parallel research on the phylogeny and classification of the world taxa that is still unfinished but has been fundamental in preparation of this text. My research on phylogeny of Coccinellidae has diversified over recent years thanks to many enthusiastic international collaborators and to incidental support from NSF-PEET Cerylonid Series grant (PI: J. McHugh, UG, Athens) that co-funded taxonomic research on the Australian Chilocorini, Noviini and Coccidulini and funded an ongoing project on molecular phylogeny of Coccinellidae. A meeting discussing invertebrate invasions during the International Congress of Entomology in Brisbane (2004) resulted in an 'Aggregation of Coccinellidae Workers' at the National Museum of Natural History in Washington DC a year later (May 2005), generously supported by an NSF-Invasive Species Research Coordination Network Grant (PI: G. Roderick, UC Berkeley) and USDA. During the meeting Natalia Vandenberg and I presented a detailed review of current classification of Coccinellidae including recognised tribes and subfamilies, that was followed by very thorough round-table discussion that brought in many new ideas and characters, subsequently followed in my research and that of others. As a relative newcomer to the field of global coccinellid systematics, I had to rely on the knowledge of my experienced colleagues. I especially thank Roger Booth (the Natural History Museum, London) and Natalia Vandenberg (USDA, SEL Washington DC) for their generous support, friendship and unlimited access to their knowledge of ladybirds, as well as for extensive loans of material under their care, without which it would have been impossible to complete this study. Daniel Burckhardt, J. Adriano Giorgi, Hong Pang, J. Poorani, Robert Pope and Wioletta Tomaszewska are sincerely acknowledged for their great collaboration on various papers, and Robert Gordon for sharing his extensive knowledge of ladybirds and for critical review of several papers.

I also thank the following individuals and institutions for making available type material and other specimens used in this study:

C.A.M. Reid (AM); M. Barclay and R.G. Booth (BMNH); A. Ramsdale (BPBM); F. Gernier (CMN); P. Bouchard and A. Zmudzinska (CNC); B. Viklund (NRM); P. Gillespie (NSWDA); J. Dally (NTMD); J.F. Grimshaw (NAQS); J. Donaldson (QDPIB); R.I. Storey (QDPIM); G.B. Monteith (QMB); E.G. Matthews and J. Forrest (SAM); L. Semeraro (VAIC); N. Vandenberg (USNM); G. Daniels (UQIC); and P. Perkins (MCZ).