Abstract

This article deals with the construction of the insect ethnozoological dominium by the inhabitants of Tapera County, which is located in the municipality of São Gonçalo dos Campos, Bahia State. Data were obtained from March to May 2005 through open-ended interviews carried out with 23 men and 8 women, whose ages ranged from 6 to 66 years old. Interviewees were asked about how they perceived and defined the animals considered as insects, which types they knew, and if they used them as food resource. Most of the interviews were tape-recorded, and semi-literal transcriptions are kept at the Ethnobiology Laboratoty of the Universidade Estadual de Feira de Santana. Considering the ethnozoological classification system of the inhabitants of Tapera, the term insect is a broad semantic category that brings together animals of different and not systematically related taxonomic groups. Apparently, these animals are culturally perceived and categorized as insects because they are usually considered as noxious, disgusting, and disease carrier creatures. True insects can be excluded from this ethnocategory due to the perception people have that such animals do not cause injuries or because they are useful. Perceptions toward these animals imply ambiguous behavior and feelings, which range from more positive attitudes (conservative) to more negative (destructive).

Keywords

ethnoentomology, perception, traditional knowledge, insects