

BOOK REVIEWS

Ten Years of "Microlepidoptera Palaearctica"

During a meeting of Bavarian entomologists in Munich in 1958, a discussion occurred regarding investigations of the Microlepidoptera. In the presence of Dr. G. Petersen (Berlin) and myself, Dr. H. J. Hannemann (Berlin) expressed his opinion that a new revised edition of the now quite obsolete Rebel (1901) catalogue was much needed. I said that the situation could not be solved by editing the catalogue, but that we should consider publishing a modern revision of this group, covering the Palaearctic Region, and applying a holistic approach.

I have thought about this idea ever since, and after two decades, I refer to this discussion as the hour at which the "MP" was conceived, although the period required to produce the work in its final form lasted another seven years. The first volume was completed in 1965. The significance of the work, however, became evident only after the first three volumes had appeared. These included 2135 text pages, 105 color plates, 465 ink drawing plates, and covered a total of 1052 species, including 284 synonyms, with descriptions of 126 species and 11 genera new to science. At present, treatments of the Crambinae, Ethmiidae, Cochyliinae, triline Acrobosinae, and Lecithoceridae are available.

The concept of this work was first presented to lepidopterists at the International Congress of Entomology in Vienna in 1960. Eighteen theses supporting the work were accepted and adopted as taxonomic studies by a number of periodicals.

The complicated background through which the work originated remains obscure. Even P. C. Zeller, perhaps the most outstanding lepidopterist of the past century, left behind 11 synonyms in the single subfamily Crambinae. Thus, a mere revision of Rebel's catalogue never would have led to the goals which we resolved to attain through our work.

I was aware from the very beginning that such a magnificent project hinges on finding a satisfactory publisher. The question was, could we find one who would realize that business and profit are not the primary goals when a work of this kind is to be undertaken? My doubts were realized when negotiations with the Schweizerbartscher Verlag in Stuttgart fell through because of the publisher's disproportionate financial demands. By accident my project attracted the attention of a representative of the Badische Anilin-und Sodafabrik (BASF), in Ludwigshafen, with whom I had been meeting when I was in Berlin. Through his influence, I gained access to Mr. Kurt Schäfer, business director of the BASF, a highly cultured person. Schäfer had spent three full decades in Shanghai where he met Hermann Höne, the famous organizer of lepidopteran expeditions to China. Schäfer and I agreed in our admiration for the works of Goethe and Busch.

Of course, Schäfer himself was not the one who would ultimately decide upon the support of my project. That was up to Professor Wurster, director general of the BASF. But Schäfer was Wurster's right-hand man. Wurster had important contacts (he was, for instance, a member of the board of the Deutsche Bank, the Volkswagen-Stiftung, and the Germanische National-Museum in Nuremberg). He was also a member of the central committee of the Deutsche Forschungs-Gemeinschaft (DFG), which was principally sponsored by the BASF. My meeting with Professor Wurster was far from smooth at first. It was not easy to win over such a business manager to a project of this kind. Fortunately, we found a precious agreement in our musical interests. Yet the battle was still not won. What decided it was the visit which both gentlemen paid to our collections at the Landessammlung für Naturkunde, in Karlsruhe. Here it was Nature itself that prevailed: I demonstrated, using a binocular lens, some representatives of the genera *Cosmopterix*, *Lithocolletis*, *Adela*, *Orneodes*, etc., the splendour of which so impressed both gentlemen that they no longer hesitated in making their decision.

Under these circumstances, I felt obliged to express my sincerest gratitude to them, which prompted me to name the splendid species *Euplocamus schaeferi* and *Ethmia wursteri* in their honor.

The critical moment, however, appears to have been the visit to Professor Hesse, president of the DFG, to whom I had gained access through Wurster. I not only handed Professor Hesse my application, but also answered his numerous questions. The debate in the presidium of the DFG, however, developed unfavorably and, still, before the final vote, it was decided not to recommend publication of the work. Here, it seems, a freak occurrence came to our assistance again; at that moment, one of the members of the presidium uttered the following remark, "What would your decision be if the proposer's name did not spell Amsel but Linnaeus?". In the ensuing vote, my proposal was accepted unanimously. Thus the DFG assumed responsibility for the economic aspects of the project.

The next problem was that of finding a suitable publisher. After my attempt in Stuttgart fell through, an idea occurred to me during my short holiday in the Tyrol that the person needed should be an entomologist. I left the Tyrol directly for Vienna, where, after years of previous intensive correspondence and developing friendship, I finally met with Hans Reisser. Reisser was an outstanding lepidopterist and editor of a significant lepidopteran periodical in Austria. He also belonged to the Reisser dynasty of printers and, moreover, his word was of great weight with the printers Fromme & Co. Reisser was a man of outstanding organizing ability, exceptional scope of knowledge, and unique personal charm and culture. He became just as enthusiastic about the idea as I was.

What remained now was to find an artist who would agree to undertake the illustrations. Long before the definitive "yes" was given by the DFG, I had been exchanging letters with Dr. Frantisek Gregor, whose color illustrations, accompanying his own lepidopteran papers, had attracted my attention for many years. Gregor is an exceptionally talented man, although particularly shy and modest, but it was evident (to us, as well as to him) that he would be the one to take over this task of extraordinary importance. Dr. D. Povolny, Gregor's intimate friend, engaged him in passionate debates along these lines. I wanted to see that a work as extensive as the "MP" be adequately carried through to completion. Gregor provided both the precision of a scientist and the singular talent of an artist. Today, after many years, it is clear that Gregor's artistry is comparable to that of both Robinson and Culot. Now, Gregor's talents have become known on an international scale. To date, he has painted some 2000 color illustrations for the "MP."

Let us consider again the personality of Hans Reisser. It is his devotion to the idea, and his organizing ability, as well as his splendid skill in translating, and other indefinable attitudes involving the project, to which the work owes its final realization.

Reisser, Schäfer and Wurster have passed away, as have other persons who did not contribute directly to the "MP," such as Dr. S. Obrázcov, Professor Dr. G. de Lattin, and Dr. Graf v. Toll, but who supported the work with their authority. In fact, their work contributed to the knowledge of the groups being elaborated for the "MP." During the past years we established an editorial committee including the late Hans Reisser, Professor Sauter (Zurich), Dr. U. Roesler (Karlsruhe), as well as myself. Dr. U. Roesler is expected to take over as my successor when I step down.

There may be different opinions concerning the concept of the work. 1) One may argue that the present knowledge of Microlepidoptera of the Palaearctic Region is too incomplete (due to the inaccessibility of many regions) to be supported by sufficient material, that 2) specialists are not available for all groups, and that 3) the volumes have not been issued in systematic order.

Such objections are spurious, considering the immense publicity of a similar well-known and useful work, Lindner's "Fliegen der Palaarktischen Region," which deals with the Diptera. The order in which the various volumes of "MP" are issued depends on the time and energy which the different authors have to devote to the project, the degree to which the various taxonomic groups are known, and the availability of material.

Our prior experience suggests that future individual volumes should not cover more than a maximum number of 250 species. Certainly, even the question of the price of a single volume cannot be overlooked. This problem is entirely out of the hands of the editors. It is set by the publisher and the sponsor, that is, the DFG. Ever since the first volume was issued, 500 subscription copies have been produced. Even such a voluminous book as Part Four (which is a double volume) has received wide publicity.

The authors for all of the future volumes have been arranged. We have been trying to provide extra help for Gregor, the only illustrator of the work so far, whose outstanding performance to date must not be allowed to suffer from time shortage or other future stresses. Therefore, under Gregor's guidance, our colleague Zawada (Cracow) obtained the necessary training for illustrating some of the groups.

On the tenth anniversary of the "MP," we may state, with satisfaction, that our work is a success. Such a major work requires both great personalities and an exceptionally favorable constellation. In other words, to produce such magnificent volumes requires both talented people and the proper conditions under which they can work. This has been accomplished by complying with the words of Nietzsche: "I love people who can give away themselves." The "MP" has been lucky in having found such people, and because of this I believe that we shall eventually succeed in completing this great work.

H. G. AMSEL, *Landessammlungen für Naturkunde Karlsruhe, D75 Karlsruhe 1, Erbprinzenstrasse 13, Postfach 4045, Karlsruhe, West Germany.*

Editor's Note: This manuscript was originally written by Dr. H. G. Amsel, Karlsruhe, Germany and has been translated into English by Prof. Dalibor Povolny of Brno, Czechoslovakia. It has been extensively edited by A.P.P. prior to publication.

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BUTTERFLIES OF THE AUSTRALIAN REGION, second ed., by Bernard D'Abrera. 1977. Lansdowne Press, Melbourne, Australia. 415 pp., many illustrations. Available exclusively in North America through Entomological Reprint Specialists, P.O. Box 77224, Dockweiler Station, Los Angeles, California 90007. Price \$87.50 (U.S.).

When I reviewed the first edition of this book in these pages some years ago, I waxed rather poetic in my praise of it. I regret to say that I cannot be so enthusiastic about the revised edition. The promotional material that preceded the volume suggested that substantial modifications of the text and illustrations would make this book as indispensable to the students of Australian regional butterflies as was the first—implying that the first edition would become obsolete. With few exceptions, notably the treatment of the Lycaenidae, such has not been the case.

The illustrations have not essentially changed since the first edition (to be sure, there are a few additions and deletions), and while the illustrations are still very good (the best available), my feeling is that the printing is not as good as it was in the first edition, nor are the colors as true-to-life. Perhaps the shortcomings here may be attributed to the use of the same, apparently now tired, plate blocks.

The most important contribution in this book is the complete revision of the section on the Lycaenidae based on Eliot's excellent 1973 higher classification of the group. One can only wish that other families had been so revised. A few species accounts have been rewritten to comply with revisions published (chiefly in England) since the publication of the first edition. These include rewritings on *Ornithoptera goliath*