

BUTTERFLIES OF THE AFROTROPICAL REGION, by Bernard d'Abrera. 1980. Large 4to, 593 pp., illustrated throughout in color. Lansdowne (Melbourne), in association with E. W. Classey. Price in the U.K. £59.50.

Having been so closely involved with the genesis of this book, it is not easy for me to be entirely detached in reviewing it. Nevertheless, d'Abrera has said so little about the relationship of his work to mine, other than the initial statement on the title page, that I feel I must enlarge upon it, lest I be held responsible for the shortcomings of his book.

The catalogue mentioned by d'Abrera is the unpublished first draft of an annotated checklist of the African butterflies (including the Hesperidae, not covered by him). This will, in due course, be published by the British Museum (Natural History) after being checked, further elaborated upon, and revised where necessary by members of the staff of that institution. It includes a complete synonymy with references to the literature for all names and type localities, as well as a full bibliography and much detailed information on range and habitat.

In his text d'Abrera has made little attempt to distinguish his own taxonomic innovations from mine, and I must therefore take this opportunity to disclaim responsibility for at least two of his worst errors: Page 310: d'Abrera has raised *E. (B.) mardania dealbata* to specific rank on grounds which are clearly invalid. If he considers the eastern populations to be specifically distinct from those of central and western Africa, *orientis* Karsch, 1895, is the oldest available name, not *dealbata* Carcasson 1958. Page 358: d'Abrera has revived the specific status of *C. epijasius* Reiche, but not that of *C. saturnus* Butler. These two taxa may not be conspecific, but if so, it is absurd to separate *jasius* L. from *epijasius* but not from *saturnus*.

Apart from these somewhat personal comments, d'Abrera's book suffers from three major weaknesses. It was put together in great haste, the format and layout do not lend themselves to a work of such size, and the plates leave a good deal to be desired. In a field guide it is useful to have the figures accompanying the text for easy identification, but this is not necessary in a large book of this sort. Indeed, in d'Abrera's book this format has resulted in large areas of blank paper and wasted space in the plates, despite a seriously undernourished text. The book lacks an introductory discussion, vegetation maps, any mention of the biogeographic divisions of the African butterfly fauna, and it contains no consideration of how this fauna relates to that of other faunistic regions. Within the text there are no references to the literature, and the year of publication is given only for specific names. Brackets denoting generic substitutions have not been used, making it difficult to trace original descriptions. There is only a mention of species and subspecies, which have not been figured. There are no generic diagnoses, and family descriptions are sketchy in the extreme. Subfamily and tribal names have been ignored, even for the endemic Lipteninae, which are such a characteristic feature of the African fauna. There is no mention of early stages or larval food-plants.

Many of the specimens illustrated are old, worn and torn, and the method of pinning them on a light background and using flash seems especially designed to emphasize every imperfection. Many of the species which are illustrated with very poor specimens, or not at all, are represented by long fresh series in the National Museum of Nairobi. Although d'Abrera visited Kenya, apparently he did not bother to make use of the museum collections. Reproduction of many plates is fuzzy, a number of captions have been transposed, and some of the specimens figured have been misidentified. There are many unaccountable omissions, misspelt names and localities, wrong naming authorities and inaccurate distribution data. In reading through the text and examining the figures, I have found at least thirty-five such factual or typographical errors. No doubt further study will reveal additional ones. It is sad to have to be so negative about a work, which if given more care and attention to detail and less haste, might have been an outstanding contribution to the literature on African butterflies.

R. H. CARCASSON, 2449 Evelyn Place, Victoria, B.C. V8N 1E9, Canada.