

## BOOK REVIEW

BUTTERFLIES OF THE AFRO-TROPICAL REGION (Volume 2 of *Butterflies of the World*), by Bernard D'Abrera. 1980. E. W. Classey Ltd. Price approximately \$150.

There are others who will review this book from the viewpoint of a professional entomologist; this review is the opinion of an experienced amateur. While I think this book is well worth the long wait and the relatively high price, I find myself somewhat disappointed. The publishers have led us to believe that "it will virtually replace . . . Seitz" (my quotes from a recent Classey flyer), but I cannot agree with this description. There is much that is missing from this volume and it appears as though considerations of cost have cut out much of what could have made it a true "replacement" for Seitz. This is unfortunate, as the volume is the first attempt in over fifty years to cover all the African taxa and as such could have commanded almost any price.

The main problem with the book is its incompleteness. It purports to include Carcasson's new catalogue, but the list that appears is implicit, is not synonymic, and does not have a complete bibliography. A comparison of Peters' checklist (1952) and D'Abrera indicates that many changes have been made in classification over the past 30 years and that a number of species that are described in Seitz and supported in Peters are missing from the present volume. One has only an occasional clue as to where they have been placed, and the D'Abrera index does not list subspecies, making the task even more difficult. Although the author claims that there are only a few species which are shown, the book has far too many instances of "I have not seen . . ." For the book to be complete such statements should be followed with "but the description is as follows . . .," this is unfortunately not the case. The author declines to include keys "as they would be largely redundant," but in many cases the differences are not obvious nor are the illustrations good enough to warrant this type of omission. A small point—the volume covers the "Ethiopian region" of Seitz but adds to it the area now known as Yemen in Southern Arabia. This complicates the problem of the checklist by adding a number of species (particularly in the *Pieridae*).

The illustrations, while impressive, could be better. In the first place the registration and the color balance are both slightly off. Compare the illustration of *Lampides boeticus* in this volume with that in volume I (Australian Region) or with that in Pennington. While this is perhaps an extreme case it points up a technical problem that I hope the publishers will correct in future volumes in the series. The author needs to improve the technique of photographing reflectant wings, the glare on many *Acraeids* is distracting. In addition I wonder if page folds across wings were not avoidable.

The central point of my comments is that this volume is not a complete reference work in itself. One still needs Seitz, Peters, Stempffer, Pennington and several other references to do a proper job. Collectors in East and Southern Africa have many excellent works readily available; those whose collections are concentrated in West Africa are still forced to guess. I find I cannot use the book to make a positive identification of a specimen even when I know the identity from other sources. A companion volume to D'Abrera, containing the Carcasson synonymic catalogue, keys where necessary, and original descriptions of species not figured in D'Abrera would solve most of the problem and in my opinion is urgently needed.

I realize that the preceding comments are somewhat negative. However, it should be stressed that in spite of these problems it is still a magnificent volume. The photographs of the incomparable collection of the BMNH are worth many times the price of the book and the shots of collecting locales are positively "mouth-watering." I highly recommend this book to all lepidopterists, professional and amateur. Mr. D'Abrera deserves highest praise for his efforts to bring us up to date on the highly complex taxa of a rapidly changing continent.

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