

BOOK REVIEWS

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THE EMPEROR MOTHS OF NAMIBIA, by Rolf Oberprieler. 1995. Published by Ecoguild Publishers, P. O. Box 178, Hartbeespoort 0216, South Africa, in collaboration with the Namibian Scientific Society and the Lepidopterists' Society of Southern Africa. ix + 91 pages, 84 color photographs on 30 plates, one map. Hard cover, dustjacket, glossy paper, 18 × 24 cm, ISBN-0-9583889-2-X. Available from Ecoguild Publishers (FAX 1211-591506) for US \$48 (postpaid, surface rate).

Virtually all books and monographs published on African saturniids have been out-of-print for many years. Saturniidae enthusiasts must seek the works by Pierre-Claude Rougeot or Eliot Pinhey on dealers' lists of used books, and, for the less available ones, they must try to find those in a regional library. Now, a nice book depicting most of the genera of African saturniids in color is again available.

The author, Rolf Oberprieler, is currently a professional entomologist at the Plant Protection Research Institute in Pretoria, but before that he was for many years a resident of Namibia (formerly Southwest Africa). Oberprieler has given us an outstanding treatment of the Saturniidae of Namibia by way of his intensive and longtime efforts as observer in the field, rearer in the lab, photographer, and finally as writer. In the Preface he acknowledges that many gaps remain in our knowledge of Namibian saturniids, but that his book is intended to summarize what is already known (including his own unpublished data) and to stimulate additional research by others. The name for the group that Oberprieler uses, namely "emperor moths," seems to follow the tradition of Pinhey who coined many common names. This appears to be based on the fact that the only saturniid found in Britain is called the emperor (*Saturnia pavonia*), and Pinhey was an Englishman. I regret that this group name has taken hold for African species, because the name "giant silk moths" seems to be well accepted in other parts of the world, except Australia, where, perhaps predictably, saturniids are also called emperor moths.

Oberprieler is a leading expert on Saturniidae. He classifies the genera *Ludia*, *Goodia*, and *Vegetia* in the tribe Ludiini of the subfamily Saturniinae, instead of the traditional arrangement under a subfamily Ludiinae. Well-known species like *zambesina* and *belina* (the mopane worm widely eaten by African peoples) he places in the genus *Imbrasia*, treating *Gonimbrasia* as a synonym. I concur with these taxonomic decisions. Adults of several of the lesser-known species have not heretofore been illustrated, and the larvae of many species are shown and described for the first time. Based on his knowledge of the Saturniidae of the regions bordering Namibia and their habitat requirements, Oberprieler is able to speculate that *Eochroa trimenii*, *Vegetia ducalis*, and *Aurivillius aratus* probably also fly in Namibia, and thus includes them in his book. Color photographs of mature larvae of several species in the tribe Bunaeini bear a striking resemblance to larvae of the neotropical subfamily Ceratocampinae (also Saturniidae). Both groups feed on small-leaved legumes like acacias and mimosas, so we may assume that this convergence of larval appearance of unrelated groups evolved to provide crypsis on the foodplants. Larvae of both groups have thick "thorns" dorsally, silver flecks laterally, and often red and yellow markings.

Although Namibia is a comparatively large country, its fauna of Saturniidae, totalling only about 28 species, must be considered as impoverished considering the large number of saturniids known from sub-Saharan Africa. Many more species fly in the moist regions of Zaire, Nigeria, and Kenya, for example, than in arid Namibia. The author discusses faunistics and ecology in introductory chapters. He also provides chapters on biology (life histories), foodplants, collection and preservation, and the historical work by earlier entomologists that led to the discovery of the various species. These discussions are instructive to both beginning and advanced lepidopterists. Concern for habitat conservation also turns up in the text occasionally. The text for each species includes sections on distribution, foodplants, and diagnosis and variation.

The book is an excellent combination of color photographs and narrative to serve as a reference for the advanced Saturniidae specialist and as an introduction to African Sat-

urniidae for the beginner. It is a well-organized work, apparently free of misspellings and typographical errors. The value of the book to readers in Africa is indisputable. However, I expect that many copies will be sold outside of Africa, because this group is unquestionably the most widely collected and reared of any moth family.

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SATURNIIDAE MUNDI: SATURNIID MOTHS OF THE WORLD, PART 1, by Bernard D'Abrera. 1995. Published by Automeris Press, Sportplatzweg 5, D-75210 Keltern, Germany, in association with Hill House, Melbourne & London. 177 pages, 76 color plates. Hard cover, 26 × 35 cm, dustjacket, ISBN-3-931374-01-7, £195 (about \$300 US).

This is the first of three volumes proposed to cover the Saturniidae of the world. It includes all of the Arsenurinae, Ceratocampinae, most of the Hemileucinae (including *Automeris* and *Hemileuca*) i.e., groups all confined to the New World, plus the Palaearctic Agliinae. The stunning color photographs show all species life-size. Looking at one of the color plates is exactly like looking into a case with real specimens—there is absolutely no room for improvement on the illustrations. Upon receiving this book, I felt as if I had acquired a huge collection of hundreds of real specimens for me to use and show. It is books such as these that stimulate young people to become lepidopterists. If someone wants to become familiar quickly with the diversity of this moth family, *Saturniidae Mundi* will serve that purpose better than anything else.

The introductory text is largely a philosophical discussion, which is interesting and held my attention. To some scientific-minded readers who rarely or never expose themselves to writings by philosophers, it may be boring or even threatening, but it does not detract from the utility of the book. D'Abrera points out that his book is intended as a pictorial catalog to the Saturniidae collection at the Natural History Museum (BMNH) in London, not as a complete treatment of the family. Of course, using that particular collection ensures that the coverage will be close to complete. The author is also accepting loans from lepidopterists in other countries of specimens or photographs of species missing from the BMNH collection, some of which appear in the last two plates of Part 1.

D'Abrera has a nice historical appreciation of early literature and workers on Saturniidae. Photographic portraits of several Saturniidae specialists are shown at the beginning. He reproduces for us two of Jacob Hübner's color plates from two centuries ago. As a taxonomist, I find the citations to original descriptions of all species covered to be a very useful aspect of the book. Although the Cercophaninae and Oxyteninae are now considered by most to be in the Saturniidae, unfortunately I do not expect that they will be included in *Saturniidae Mundi*.

Since I do not work with butterflies, I have been largely unaware of the monumental works that D'Abrera has given us in the last quarter century and of the criticisms of those books. So I did some checking, both on the telephone and by reading reviews in journals, including this one. Although many do appreciate and value D'Abrera's work, I am frankly disturbed that the invalid, irrelevant, and even malicious criticisms outweigh the valid and constructive criticisms. Some examples follow.

1. "There are some species missing." I addressed this above.
2. "Edges of wings of some specimens run into the binding of the book." At least D'Abrera shows us the whole insect. Many works show us a lepidopteran body with only the right or left wings; we can only assume such specimens fly in tight circles. Incidentally, this problem has been corrected in his recent books, including this one.
3. "There are no range maps." This borders on the ridiculous. If I cannot even draw the distributional limits of the "well-known" saturniid *Antheraea polyphemus* in Canada,