

BOOK REVIEWS

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DISCOVERING MOTHS—NIGHTTIME JEWELS IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD, by John Himmelman, 2002. Softcover, \$18.95 from Down East Books, Camden, Maine. ISBN 0-89272-528-1. 232 pages, with 22 color plates and numerous B&W drawings.

The study of moths is essentially a subjective and emotional pursuit. If we plotted out the allocation of resources—dollars and number of researchers—against various measures of moth diversity, no cost accountant could make sense of the pattern. The few economically important pests would show a concentration of effort, but otherwise there would be an eclectic mishmash of attention to moths that are variously large and gaudy, bizarre in habit, or tiny and obscure, probably largely because they sparked a young mind for these very qualities. As a consequence, taxonomic specialists heavily populate the ranks of both dedicated amateur and professional entomologists. John Himmelman's book *Discovering Moths* is a reminder that we are missing a lot.

Unlike the situation for butterflies, the young person or newly seduced adult has few choices for general books on moths (primarily Covell's excellent *A Field Guide to the Moths of Eastern North America* and the Dover reprint of Holland's *Moth Book*) to nurture a developing interest. Other treatments are often too scientifically lofty and detailed and too expensive to be widely accessible.

Discovering Moths is a refreshing addition to the Lepidoptera literature. More than a compilation of facts and descriptions revering moth diversity, the book is a personal narrative that appeals to our (often suppressed) emotional attraction to Leps. The chapters cover the author's personal experiences and reactions to a variety of topics: sugaring and blacklighting, moth-related activities through the seasons, moth lore in our culture (*Of Moths and Men*), past and present moth experts and other colorful characters, a brief and select introduction to moth families, and some material on collecting, rearing, and photographing moths. Sprinkled throughout are nuggets of life history observations on both familiar and many obscure but attractive species. Representative species for fifteen families, various larvae, and some day-flying moths are well-illustrated in color, and the author's own attractive ink stipple drawings introduce various sections and depict (sometimes whimsically) various moths and caterpillars. I found only a few insignificant errors or typos ("circumference" instead of diameter as a measure of

size, and a photo legend reversing the identity of Dave Wagner and Brian Scholtens during the "BioBlitz" diversity project).

Himmelman is a professional writer on nature topics, not a professional biologist nor strictly interested only in Lepidoptera. His material reflects a regional orientation to the East Coast and New England where he is based, and his prose is personal, wry, and witty. Such writing can be an unstable balance between humorous and colorful discourse, and being too contrived and familiar so as to distract from the subject at hand. Himmelman largely avoids these rhetorical excesses, although some readers used to the concise, formal, grammatically correct style we normally encounter in our Lep literature will have to make an adjustment. His Eastern bias in no way detracts from the value of the book as an explanation for our fascination with moths, rather than as a taxonomic overview of North American species. I would have liked to have seen a section on Holland and his reign at Carnegie Museum as well as a mention of some of the past western U.S. luminaries such as Lloyd Martin with his stories of 19th century collectors. These topics and others are some this book should incite others to write about. I highly recommend *Discovering Moths* for anyone with an interest in our natural history heritage.

MICHAEL M. COLLINS, 11901 Miwok Path, Nevada City, California 95959, USA

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FIELD GUIDE TO BUTTERFLIES OF SOUTH DAKOTA, by Gary M. Marrone. South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks, Pierre, South Dakota, 2002. 378 pages. Softcover, \$38.95 + \$5.00 shipping from the publisher (412 W. Missouri, Pierre, South Dakota 57501 or on the web at www.sdgifp.info). ISBN 0-9712463-1-9.

An account of South Dakota's butterflies could have been written by no one except Gary Marrone who has studied this fauna for nearly three decades. This compact book treats each of the 177 species known from the state. The introductory chapters are brief (18 pages) giving encapsulated versions of butterfly life history, studies of butterflies in South Dakota, physiography and climate of the state, and habitats illustrated with photographs. Families of butterflies are introduced by a general description of less than a page. The species accounts include the common and scientific nomenclature, a short description of the adult and sec-