

## Book reviews

### Butterflies of British Columbia

Guppy, C. S. & Shepard, J. H. 2001: *Butterflies of British Columbia*. UBC Press, Vancouver and Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria, Canada. 414 pages. ISBN 0-7748-0809-8. Price \$95 (Hardback).

The series of books on the butterflies of the Canadian provinces has now been complemented by a book on one of the less studied yet most species rich provinces, British Columbia. A total of 187 species of butterflies (Papilionoidea and Hesperoidea) are recognized by the authors as having been recorded in the province, which has an area approximately equal to that of Finland and has a climatic gradient from south to north much like Finland. The book starts with an extensive Introduction, which gives a summary of the history of butterfly studies in the province (which began in 1858). It describes the impacts of the last glaciation and of humans on the butterfly fauna of today, discusses the conservation efforts in B.C., including how to make your garden attractive to butterflies, and finally introduces the crucial aspects of butterfly biology (morphology, ecology and phenology).

The bulk of the book is, of course, taken up by the species accounts. Each species is given 1–2 pages including photographs of both dorsal and ventral sides of museum specimens, a map showing all localities in which the species has been recorded, a bar graph showing the distribution of records in a year and, in many cases, pictures of eggs, larvae, pupae and/or live adults. The text for each species is divided into eight sections, headed Etymology, Adult, Immature stages, Biology, Subspecies, Range and habitat, General distribution and Conservation status. Finally, the book provides a bibliography that is quite useful, though some crucial references seem to be missing.

I was very impressed by the book. In stark contrast to the previous book I reviewed (Wahlberg 2001), the data for this book has been collected by

only a handful of people over about 150 years, yet the amount of information for many of the species is great. Perhaps the most favourable aspect of this book is the meticulous screening of the literature by the authors for each species, which makes the book a very reliable source of information on the life histories and host plants of the butterflies in B.C. (in contrast to the lesser quality in the equivalent book on Finnish butterflies). Cases where the biology of a species has not been recorded in B.C., but has been elsewhere, are clearly stated and possible host plants in B.C. are given.

In addition to the butterflies found in B.C., the book also gives information on butterflies found in the adjacent areas (western Alberta, southern Yukon, the Alaskan Panhandle, Washington, northern Oregon, northern Idaho and northwestern Montana). While it has not been possible to get all the records for these areas, the inclusion of these areas on the distribution maps gives the reader an idea of the general distribution of a given species in northwestern North America, e.g. whether a species is northern, concentrated in the Rocky Mountains or mainly found along the Pacific coast. Some species are illustrated that have yet to be recorded in B.C. though they have been found close to the borders of the province.

While I would recommend this book to anyone interested in the butterflies of North America, there is an element of sloppiness that the potential reader should be aware of. I would have liked to have seen the families of the host plants given (in many cases the plant genera are unfamiliar to a European reader). Indeed, in a few cases only the English name is given for the host plant and, in the case of *Parnassius smintheus*, the host-plant genus is given as only *S.*! I can only presume that in the latter case the host plant genus is *Sedum*. I would have also liked to see plates of all the species at the end of the book to facilitate comparison of the more difficult species pairs/groups. The nomenclature of some genera and higher groups are out-of-date. For instance, my favourite group,

the tribe Melitaeini, is considered a subfamily and is not even placed next to the Nymphalinae, to which they quite certainly belong.

I am no expert on North American butterflies, but discussions with Norbert Kondla and Andrew Warren (who certainly *are* experts of NA butterflies) have alerted me to some misidentifications in photos of adult butterflies. The female *Hesperia juba* on page 105 is actually a female *H. colorado idaho*, the photographs of *Speyeria atlantis* on page 278 are clearly *S. hesperis* and the two left photos (upper and undersides) of *Cercyonis oetus* on page 327 are *C. sthenele* (N. Kondla & A. Warren, pers. comm.). In addition to these misidentifications, there are a few individuals that are given the wrong subspecies name, though the species are correct in these cases.

### Butterflies of Europe photographed

Tolman, T. 2001: Photographic guide to the butterflies of Britain & Europe. Oxford University Press. ISBN 0-19-850607-4 (Hardback) 0-19-850606-6 (Paperback).

Here is what I believe to be the first attempt at a photographic guide to the butterflies of Europe as a whole, including also the Atlantic islands. A tremendous amount of work must have gone into obtaining all the pictures, especially since Tolman evidently took all but a handful himself. In other words, if you like photographic guides (or want one as a complement) this is the one to get! I reviewed the paperback version, which comes in a nice field-ready plastic cover sleeve.

A few species lack pictures, but they are often very local species which are similar to other included species, and probably could not be distinguished well from the photographs anyway. There are a couple of slightly irritating exceptions. For instance, there is no picture of *Catopsilia florella*, which *would* be instantly recognisable. It is described only as: "Male ups very pale, greenish white; unh pale, dusky yellow. Female ups yellow or white; uns dusky yellow. Unlikely to be confused with any other species." Maybe, if you have an idea what it looks like. Here you are not even given the size, so the description could fit many pierids.

Despite these shortcomings, this book is an excellent source of information on butterflies occurring in northwestern North America. I personally learned a lot about the North American butterfly fauna from reading the book carefully. I will certainly use it as one of my standard references as I delve into the systematics and evolution of Holarctic butterflies.

### References

Wahlberg, N. 2001: Butterflies of Britain and Ireland mapped (Book review). — Entomol. Fennica 12: 125–126.

**Niklas Wahlberg**

So, how does this book compare with one of its main contenders, the Collins Field Guide by Tolman (!) and with drawings by Richard Lewington (1997)? The comparison must end with victory for Tolman & Lewington over Tolman. There are a couple of points in favour of the new book. Firstly, the format (of the paperback version) is better for taking the book into the field. Secondly, the information and distribution maps are next to the pictures (not the case in Tolman & Lewington). Therefore, the index will take you directly to the picture, whereas in Tolman & Lewington you first have to find the species to find out the plate number. Thirdly, the distribution maps are larger (and in colour) so you can actually see where even the very local species can be found. Fourthly, my favourite genus *Polygonia* is not called *Polygonum*, as in the previous book...

However, the information is much more complete in Tolman & Lewington. Furthermore, photographs of live butterflies just aren't as good as well-performed drawings when it comes to identifying species. Even though the pictures in this book generally are of high quality, photos cannot always show exactly those features that distinguish a species. Similar species cannot be put side by side in exactly the same posture for easy comparison, and the butterflies cannot be forced to show every wing surface. Some species here are shown only from above or only from the side. Many are shown from both sides, but in no case

can you see all of the forewing undersides, because then it would have been necessary to use force. Dry specimens, in contrast, tend not to resist being depicted from every angle.

To summarize, this book is for those who want access to beautiful photographs, and for those who find it easier to identify the general taxonomic position of a butterfly from a real-life photo. Having done that, you will often have to check the species identification further in a book with drawn illustrations of butterflies, but then

you can always resort to your copy of Tolman & Lewington...

### References

- Tolman, T. & Lewington, R. 1997: Collins Field Guide: Butterflies of Britain and Europe. — Harper Collins Publishers Ltd., London.

**Sören Nylin**