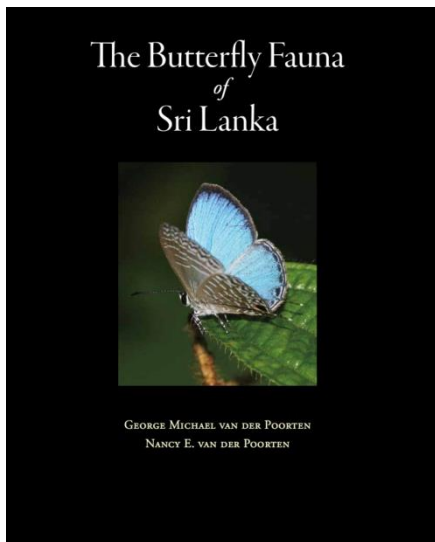


BOOK REVIEW

The butterfly fauna of Sri Lanka by George M. and Nancy E. van der Poorten. Lepedon Books, 2016; vi + 412 pp. Price (from Book Depository: <http://www.bookdepository.com/The-Butterfly-Fauna-of-Sri-Lanka/9781771361897> 25/7/16) ca \$75 incl. postage. ISBN 978 1 777136 189 7 (hardback).

The butterfly fauna of Sri Lanka was the first of any tropical region to be systematically documented. The seminal works of Moore and later Woodhouse & Henry remain classics in entomological literature. Both provided illustrated accounts of all species known from 'Ceylon' at the time of writing, together with descriptions and illustrations of many early stages. Together they set a benchmark against which all future works would be judged.



The present book represents the first real advance in our knowledge of the Sri Lankan butterfly fauna in over 70 years. It documents the 247 species presently recognized from the island, with over 3200 photographs showing mainly adult butterflies in life, but also early stages (with larvae and pupae depicted for nearly 90% of species and eggs of 50%), parasitoids, hostplants, nectar sources and habitats. Only a handful of dead, mounted specimens are depicted. For most species the living butterflies are exceptionally well observed, often with detailed notes on special behaviour, such as forced copulation by *Acraea terpsicore*, illustrated by a pair struggling on the ground, or the display of hairpencils during courtship by male *Idea jasonia*. Close-up details of structures are also depicted, such as the sphragis of a mated *A. terpsicore* female, or the everted double hairpencils of the male of *I. jasonia*. The book abounds in

such details. There are also many photographs of butterflies in flight, nectaring, mud-puddling, courting, mating and ovipositing. The wealth of material is impressive and exciting. This is natural history at its best.

The text is authoritative and extremely well written. It begins with three highly informative introductory chapters dealing with Sri Lankan geography, zoogeography of its butterflies, general butterfly biology and conservation. Then follow family by family species accounts. Each species is given full page treatment under the usual headings, with conservation issues given particular attention. In cases of difficult groups, such as the Caeruleans (*Jamides*) or Lineblues, detailed illustrated keys are provided in separate boxes. The reader should have little trouble identifying most species. Illustrations of early stages are sometimes included in species accounts, alongside their descriptions, but more often they are confined to three appendices which show thumbnail photographs of, respectively, eggs, larvae and pupae. Other appendices include an annotated species list, a list of publications on Sri Lankan butterflies as well as an extensive general bibliography, a list of larval hostplants, nectar sources, accounts of migration and a very complete glossary. Few stones are left unturned.

It is, overall, a remarkable achievement, a credit to its authors and obviously a labour of love. I strongly recommend it to anyone with a serious interest in butterflies, especially as it breaks new ground in the visual material presented and provides a model for a new type of butterfly book. It is a worthy successor to the iconic works of Moore and Woodhouse.

Reviewed by Albert Orr