

Book Review

The Butterflies of the Malay Peninsula

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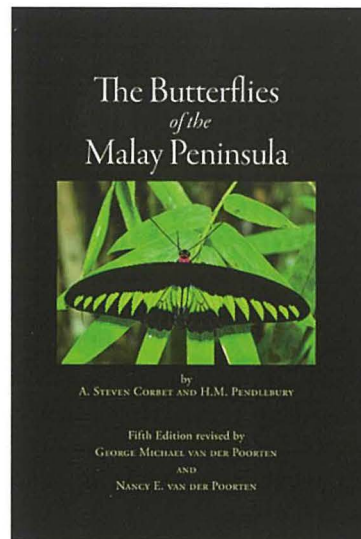
Fifth Edition revised by George Michael van der Poorten and Nancy E. van der Poorten.

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The Malay Peninsula includes the countries of Malaysia and Singapore in South-East Asia. It is located just north of the equator, lying to the south of Thailand at its northern end and, at its southern end, almost touches the island of Sumatra, Indonesia, from which it is separated by the Straits of Malacca. The Malaysian Nature Society have had a long tradition of making available to the general public works on the natural history and biodiversity of the Malay Peninsula, butterflies included.

The Butterflies of the Malay Peninsula was first published more than 80 years ago in 1934, which was followed by a 2nd Edition in 1956. The last two editions, which were revised by John N. Eliot (3rd Edition in 1978, 4th Edition in 1992), have long been out of print. It is therefore heartening to see this classic work fully revised again. This latest 5th Edition, revised by the van der Poorten's, substantially updates the text with new information on distribution, life histories and larval food plants. The taxonomy and nomenclature of each species has been updated, and the text and relevant keys have been revised with newly published information. Additionally, the layout has been modernized for improved readability. Moreover, the previous colour plates depicting adults of museum specimens have been completely replaced by an exquisite set of new photographs.

The long history of collection and study of butterflies of the Malay Peninsula, which can be traced back to 1751, has resulted in a fauna that is now exceptionally well inventoried. This relatively small area supports a staggering 1051 species of butterflies, of which 17 (1.6%) are endemic to the peninsula. The most species rich groups are the subfamilies Theclinae (Lycaenidae) and Hesperinae (Hesperiidae), with 233 and 188 species, respectively. The theclines are dominated by the tribe Arhopalini with 113 species, most of which belong to the speciose genus *Arhopala*. Four major floristic zones are recognised on



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the peninsula – coastal mangroves, lowland secondary forest, lowland primary forest (between 0–750 m), and montane primary forest (750–1500 m). Secondary forest comprises cleared areas in various states of ecological succession. Although this habitat is important for many butterflies (c. 120 species), the vast majority of species occur in lowland primary forest. Apparently, it takes at least 250 years before secondary forest reverts to primary forest, highlighting the importance of maintaining large tracts of primary forest for biodiversity conservation.

The 17 endemics consist mainly of lycaenids (11 species), but they also include a few hesperiids and one pierid, *Ixias alticola*. They occur either in lowland or highland (montane) areas, but most of the species' endemic to the Malay Peninsula are rare, often known only from the single type specimen. Of the 10 species of *Delias* recorded from the Malay Peninsula, most are restricted to the montane forest zone. Differentiation within species on the peninsula is not particularly pronounced, but *Delias georgina* is of particular interest. Four subspecies of this butterfly have been recognised from the peninsula, with three of these endemic to isolated mountains: *D. georgina keda* (Kedah Peak), *D. georgina tahanica* (Gunong Tahan), and *D. georgina orphne* (Mt Ophir). The other subspecies, *D. georgina zenobia*, is more widely distributed but restricted to the highlands of the Main Range.

The book is organised into 16 chapters. The introductory chapters (Ch 1–10) deal with morphology, life histories, nomenclature and classification, geographical distribution and biogeography, wing pattern and variation, speciation, population size, history of collecting, methods of collection and study, and keys to identify families. The remaining chapters (Ch 11–16) concern the treatment of species and make up the bulk of the book, with a single chapter devoted to each of the six families. Apart from the Hesperidae, which are treated last, the order of families follows modern classification according to phylogenetic relationships. A series of detailed Appendices then follow, which provide a checklist of species, species omitted and those with questionable records, species endemic to the Malay Peninsula, notes on taxonomy and distribution, the numerical composition of species and subspecies in each family, subfamily and tribe, and comments on erroneous larval food plants. The text concludes with an extensive bibliography, acknowledgements and three indices (general, common names and scientific names).

The last 166 pages of the book are devoted to the figures and colour plates. The black and white figures (25 pages) portray more than 450 clear line drawings of the genitalia to aid in taxonomic identification. The colour plates comprise a completely new set of 132 plates illustrating every species reliably recorded from the area, showing a half image of the dorsal and ventral surfaces of both males and females. There is also a smaller set of six colour plates illustrating the immature stages of selected species, representing each butterfly subfamily. The new colour plates are an outstanding feature of this edition. Endless hours have been spent photographing and editing thousands of images, all based on specimens preserved in the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum in Singapore and the Natural History Museum in London, England, as well as in a few private collections.

As with any book of this magnitude, errors are inevitable. Many of the errors in the book concern the colour plates, and the authors have prepared a Corrigenda, which can be accessed from the *Moths of Borneo* website (<https://www.mothsofborneo.com/>), as well as from the Lepodon Books website (http://www.lepodonbooks.com/TheButterfliesOfTheMalayPeninsula_5thEdition.html). Some of the errors in the colour plates concern identification of sex, which have arisen due to mislabelling or naming the

images with the wrong sex. But these issues are relatively minor considering the wealth of new information accrued over the past 30 years that the authors have painstakingly collated for this impressive, revised edition. If you love butterflies generally, have a professional or amateur interest in the scientific study of butterflies, or want to learn more about the butterfly fauna of the Oriental region then this textbook is definitely for you!

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【和文抄訳】

『マレー半島の蝶』は1934年に初版が、1956年に第2版が出版された。その後、ジョン・エリオット氏によって改訂された2つの版(1978年の第3版と1992年の第4版)は長い間絶版となっていたので、この古典的な作品が今回、再び完全に改訂されたのは実にありがたいことである。

スリランカの蝶類研究で名高いファン・デ・ポテン氏らによって改訂された最新版では、分布、生活史や食餌植物などについての記述が大幅に更新された。また、各種の分類と学名、分類表についても新たな情報に基づき改訂されたほか、レイアウトも読みやすくするために現代的なものに変更されている。さらに、旧来のカラープレートが新たな標本の画像に完全に置き換えられている点も特筆すべきである。

マレー半島の蝶の研究は古くは1751年にさかのぼる。この長年の積み重ねによって、当地域の蝶相は他に例をみないほどに解明されている。この比較的狭いエリアに1051種が知られ、そのうち17種(1.6%)が半島固有種となっているのは驚くべきことである。最も多くの種を擁するグループは、233種のTheclinae(シジミチョウ科)と188種のHesperiinae(セセリチョウ科)である。Theclinaeにおいては、113種から構成されるArhopalini(ムラサキシジミ族)が圧倒的で、そのほとんどの種がムラサキシジミ属*Arhopala*に属している。

また、マレー半島では4つの主要な植生相が知られている。すなわち沿岸のマングローブ林、低地二次林、低地原生林(標高0–750m)、山地原生林(標高750–1,500m)である。このうち二次林は重要ではあるものの(約120種が生息)、多くの種が見ら