

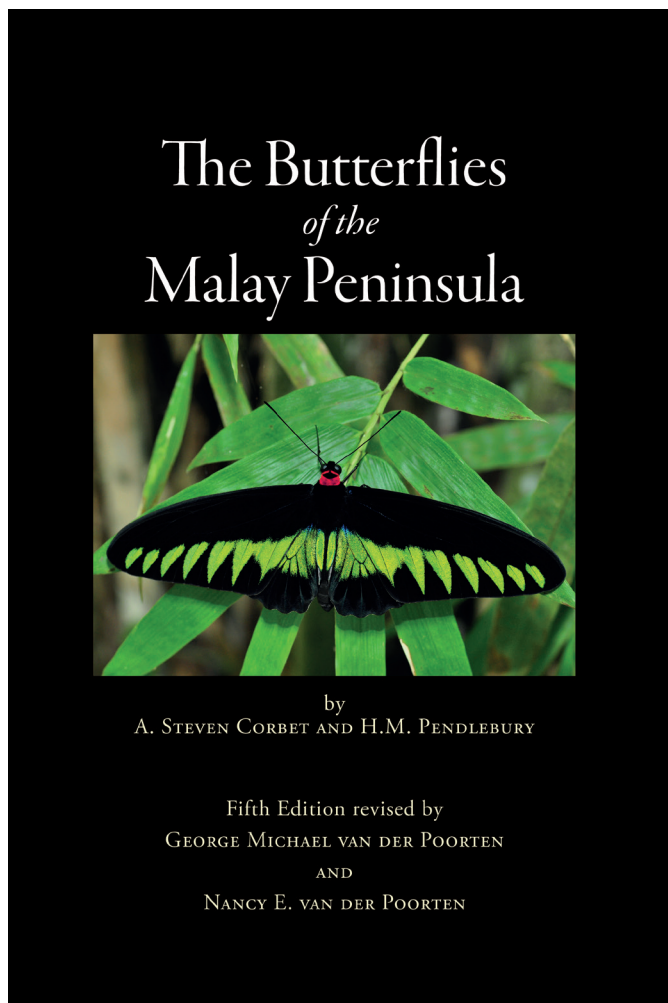
Book Review: *The Butterflies of the Malay Peninsula*, by A. Steven Corbet and H. M. Pendlebury. Fifth Edition revised by George Michael van der Poorten and Nancy E. van der Poorten (2020).

Malaysian Nature Society, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. xiii + 492 pp., 138 plates

Rounding a corner of a Malaysian forest stream in the humid afternoon heat and coming across a cluster of thirty or more puddling males of the spectacular Raja Brooke's Birdwing (*Trogonoptera brookiana*) remains one of my most memorable butterfly encounters. I had the good fortune to visit Malaysia several times before embarking on research on Neotropical butterflies, but even back then, when one in every six Neotropical butterfly species lacked a name, the rich, colorful butterfly fauna of the Malay Peninsula had a long history of research. The first edition of *The Butterflies of the Malay Peninsula*, by Alexander Steven Corbet and Maurice Pendlebury, was published in 1934, and it subsequently became the classic work on the region's butterflies. Revisions to the work by the authors and John Nevill Eliot resulted in the second, third, and fourth editions, published in 1956, 1978 and 1992, respectively. The fifth and latest edition is the result of significant revision by George Michael van der Poorten and Nancy E. van der Poorten, and it represents another major milestone in this series of publications. The revisers are well known for their extremely comprehensive works on the butterflies of Sri Lanka (G. & M. van der Poorten, 2016, 2018), and they have a profound knowledge of the biology and systematics of tropical Asian butterflies.

The fifth edition begins with a summary of the history of the series, its authors and revisers, including the revisers of the current edition, followed by additional comments on the scope and vision of the edition. The current revisers note that although "the text and layout were changed to improve readability and aesthetics, ...changes to the text were minimized to keep the spirit of the narrative of previous editions." Still, the input of the revisers is immediately obvious on page 1, which updates the description of butterfly relationships and classification with the concept of Papilionoidea now including HesperIIDae and HedyliDae. The first chapter concludes with a description of butterfly anatomy and wing venation. Chapter 2 summarizes the life cycle of butterflies, Chapter 3 discusses nomenclature and classification, and Chapter 4 reviews the distribution, habitats, diversity and biogeography of the region's 1051 butterfly species. Chapters 5 to 10 include discussions of butterfly wing patterns, geographic variation, mimicry, speciation, abundance, history of butterfly research in the region, and a key to the identification of butterfly families. The revisers seem to have resisted the temptation to substantially modify the text in these chapters, with only a few references to more recent publications where they considered it important.

Chapters 11 to 16 constitute the bulk of the book, the species accounts, arranged by family. Each chapter begins with an introduction to the family, its diversity, biology and classification, with similar accounts for tribes and genera, and identification keys are presented for the species of each genus.

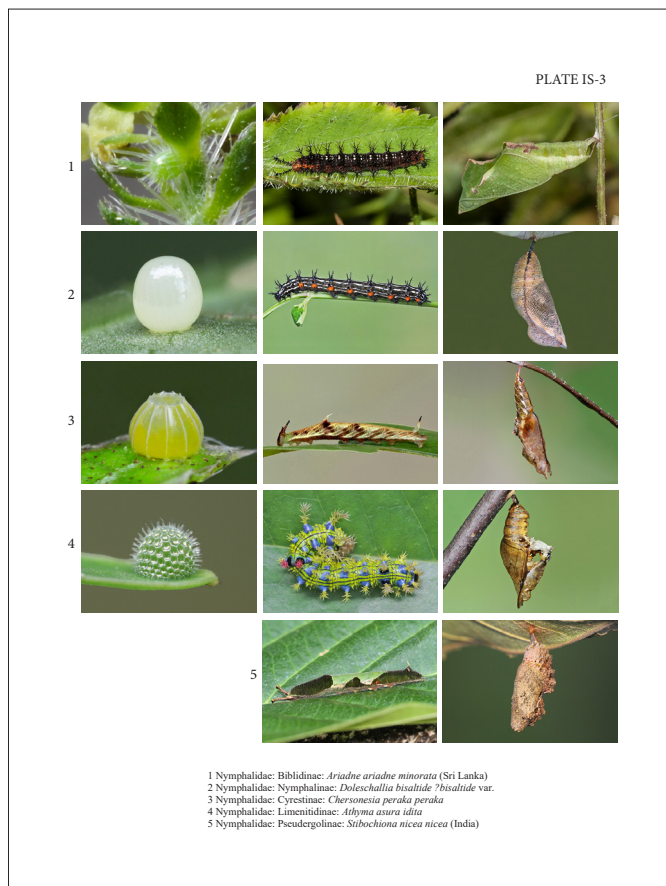


The Butterflies of the Malay Peninsula, cover.

A total of 146 drawings of larvae, wing venation, androconial scales and other structures are sprinkled throughout the text. Each species account includes notes on the identification, taxonomy, global and local distribution, and natural history of the species. Following the species accounts are several appendices; Appendix A contains a checklist of butterflies of the Malay Peninsula, with cross-references to Fleming's (1983) guide to the region's butterflies, and Appendices B, C and D provide additional notes about species omitted from the list, added, or considered questionable. Appendix E provides 239 additional notes on recent changes and additions to our knowledge on the taxonomy and distribution of the fauna, constituting an invaluable distillation of new information from numerous sources, and Appendix F summarizes species diversity by tribe. Throughout the species accounts new



The Butterflies of the Malay Peninsula, plate 48.



The Butterflies of the Malay Peninsula, immature stages plate 3.

information on immature stages has been provided by the revisers, and Appendix G includes additional notes correcting previous erroneous information on larval food plants. Following the bibliography and indices are more than 450 line drawings of the male genitalia of the region's butterflies. A welcome new addition in the fifth edition are 6 plates showing beautifully crisp images of eggs, larvae and pupae for representative species in each family.

The book concludes with one of the most important components of this fifth edition, an entirely new set of color plates, based on images taken mainly in the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum in Singapore and the Natural History Museum in London. These 132 plates include images of the upperside and underside of males and females, wherever possible, of virtually all taxa. The images and printing are of very high quality and provide not only an invaluable resource for those wishing to identify specimens, but also a fittingly beautiful testimony to this remarkable fauna.

The revisers' commitment to perfection is evident in their previous works, as well as in the fine presentation and extreme thoroughness with which they have prepared this new edition. This commitment has extended beyond the book's publication to the current 7 pages of corrigenda and addenda available at http://www.lepodonbooks.com/corrigenda_C&P5.html. The book is available from Bioquip (USA), Pemberley Books (UK), Malaysian Nature Society (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia) and from Mr. Henry Barlow (hsbar@hotmail.com).

LITERATURE CITED

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- Van der Poorten, G. M., van der Poorten, N. E. 2016. *The Butterfly Fauna of Sri Lanka*. Toronto, Lepodon Books. vi + 418 pp.
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