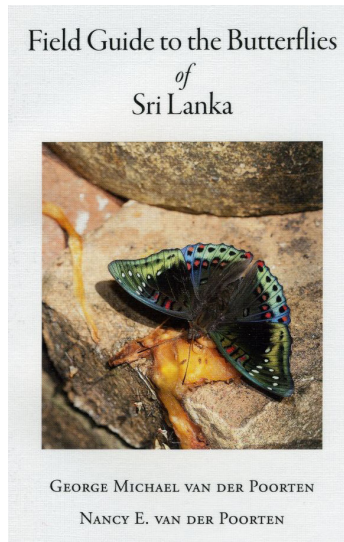


Book Reviews

Field Guide to the Butterflies of Sri Lanka by George Michael van der Poorten and Nancy E. van der Poorten, 2018. Lepodon Books, Toronto, Canada. ISBN: 978-1-77136-605-2. vi, 250 pages, 19.05 cm x 12.06 cm, 350 grams, with flexible covers.



This new book on the butterflies of Sri Lanka by the husband and wife team of George and Nancy van der Poorten comes a little over two years after the publication of the authors' *magnum opus*, *The Butterfly Fauna of Sri Lanka* (2016), a book widely regarded (with good reason) as the standard work on the subject. It needs to be stated at the outset that the book under review is not a simplified and shortened version of the 2016 book but an entirely new work which is not only designed to meet

the need of field identification of butterflies in Sri Lanka but is also the most up to date and accurate account of the composition of the butterfly fauna of Sri Lanka.

Unlike the previous monograph this field guide is a much more portable book designed to be carried in the field, measuring seven and a half inches by four and three quarter inches and weighing just over 12 ounces. The small size of the book is deceptive, however, because packed between its covers is a wealth of information. The book is superbly designed and organized with ease of accurate identification of species in mind. Introductory sections of the book deal with climatic zones in Sri Lanka and butterfly distribution, the anatomy and life cycle of butterflies, butterfly conservation, tips on how and where to observe butterflies and ways of enhancing gardens to attract butterflies. Following a section on how to use the book (explaining the organization of the book and the significance of various types of information, how to use keys, etc.) the main body of the field guide occupies pages 25-205, where the identification of butterflies is covered in detail, organized by family (Hesperiidae, Lycaenidae, Nymphalidae, Papilionidae, Pieridae, Riodinidae).

For each family a brief introduction is provided, which is followed by details for identifying species, with the information presented in text and carefully selected photographs on facing pages. For some species distribution maps are inserted next to the species accounts, for others (the majority) these are given in Appendix A. A useful feature of

the book is the addition of arrows to photographs pointing out diagnostic features for telling apart some confusingly similar species. Another useful feature is the juxtaposition of superficially similar species on the same page even if they are not closely related, allowing easy comparison. Appendix B provides a complete checklist of the butterflies of Sri Lanka and includes taxonomic notes explaining recent changes in the status and nomenclature of species and subspecies, mostly since the publication of the 2016 monograph. Appendix C is a list of host plants, which is followed by a glossary, and there is a brief list of references relevant to this book. The distribution maps (next to species' accounts or in Appendix A) are a notable feature of this book and they are probably the first published maps for butterflies in Sri Lanka; no such maps were included in the 2016 publication. Records for individual species are indicated by different colored dots: blue (historical records prior to 1950), red (confirmed records after 1950), orange (doubtful records). A little more explanation regarding "confirmed" and "doubtful" records (e.g. specimen or photograph supported or not) would have been helpful.

Over the last few decades there has been a significant increase in the number of field guides and similar books for identifying various kinds of organisms in Sri Lanka, with birds, butterflies, reptiles and mammals perhaps being the groups most often featured. This is probably partly due to an increase in local awareness and interest in wildlife, the environment and conservation, and also due to an increase in ecotourism. While most of these new publications are interesting and commendable in many ways they vary in accuracy and scientific merit. A search in the online catalogues of retailers of natural history books will turn up a number of books dealing with the butterflies of Sri Lanka and someone looking for a book for identifying butterflies in Sri Lanka may feel unsure which book is best. The answer is quite simple: George and Nancy van der Poorten's *Field Guide to the Butterflies of Sri Lanka* is the most accurate and best designed book for identifying butterflies in the field in Sri Lanka. If you are interested in the butterflies of Sri Lanka you will want to have this book and if you intend to observe and identify butterflies in the field in Sri Lanka you need this book!

Field Guide to the Butterflies of Sri Lanka is available from Pemberley Books (www.pemberleybooks.com) and Bio-Quip (www.bioquip.com), and is also available direct from the authors (www.lepodonbooks.com). The book is scheduled to be released in Sri Lanka by the end of the year, in mid December.

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