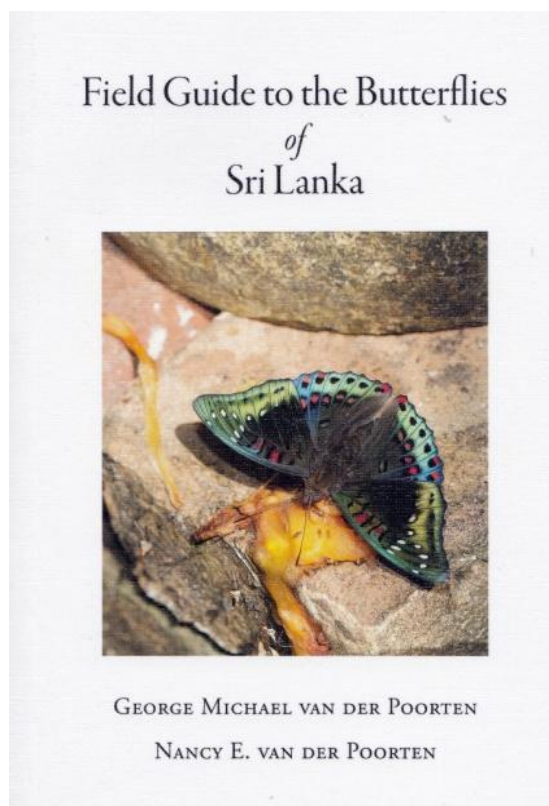


BOOK REVIEW

Field guide to the butterflies of Sri Lanka by George M. and Nancy E. van der Poorten. Lepodon Books, 2018; vi + 250 pp. Price \$US 28. ISBN 978 1 771136 052 (paperback). Available from the authors at lepodonbooks@gmail.com

Following the notable success of their recent, lavish handbook to the butterflies of Sri Lanka (van der Poorten and van der Poorten 2016), the same authors have now produced a condensed, pocket-sized version of the same for use in the field. With a slim duodecimo (12 cm x 19 cm) format weighing just 386 g, the book is a model of compactness. It slips easily into a roomy pocket, yet preserves much of the philosophy of its larger predecessor, *i.e.* to show butterflies as they appear in nature and to provide information on their ecology and behaviour.

Sri Lanka is home to 248 butterfly species, 31 of them endemic to the island. Within a relatively small geographical area is found a wonderfully rich cross-section of the Oriental Region fauna,



with almost all iconic genera represented. It is arguably one of the best introductions to this regional fauna one could have, as a large proportion of life histories are well known and one avoids the confronting diversity found, for example, in Borneo, where there are 88 species of *Arhopala* and many other mega-diverse and/or difficult groups. In Sri Lanka there are five species of this genus, just one more than in Australia.

The book serves primarily as a field identification guide. It illustrates all species presently known from Sri Lanka, with over 1154 thumbnail photographs of adult butterflies in life, depicting uppersides and undersides and, where necessary, both sexes. Difficult genera, such as the lycaenids *Spindasis* (7 spp) and *Jamides* (5 spp) and the hesperiids *Borbo*, *Parnara*, *Pelopidas* and *Suastus* (together 7 spp) are supplemented by keys and close-up photographs of diagnostic details, which are elsewhere clearly arrowed where necessary. In short, the book is extremely usable and fulfils its primary aim of field identification admirably.

For the entomologist or amateur naturalist in Sri Lanka, field identification is critical as collecting is totally banned and we are told it is illegal even to carry a net; hence, being able to identify species with binoculars and photographs is an essential skill. This book is designed with this in mind. Species accounts include concise notes on ecology, flight period and behaviour that help with field identification. Every species is provided with a distribution map, either in the main text or in an appendix. Information is provided on larval host plants and preferred adult nectar sources.

In summary, the book is exceedingly useful and a must-have for anyone visiting Sri Lanka. It is also a very neat and concise summary of the butterfly fauna of the island and well worth having as a basic reference, although its main purpose is to supplement the earlier, larger handbook. I strongly recommend this field guide to anyone with a serious interest in butterflies.

Reference

van der Poorten, G.M. and van der Poorten, N.E. 2016. *The butterfly fauna of Sri Lanka*. Lepodon Books: vi + 412 pp.

Reviewed by Albert Orr