

BOOK REVIEW

NEILD A.F.E.: THE BUTTERFLIES OF VENEZUELA, PART 2: NYMPHALIDAE II (ACRAEINAE, LIBYTHEINAE, NYMPHALINAE, ITHOMIINAE, MORPHINAE). Meridian Publications, London, 2008, 275 pp., ISBN 978-0-9527657-1-4.

The butterfly fauna of the Neotropical zone is the most diverse and abundant in the World. However, it is more a rule than an exception that the best known regions are those with only a few species, whereas those with very diverse faunas are poorly known. The consequence is that South American butterflies are not well covered in the recent literature and even the part of the famous series written by Bernard d'Abrera, which deals with the Neotropical zone, consists of a catalogue of pictures with no attempt to solve the chaos. Anybody trying to study Neotropical butterflies has to search for information scattered in many different journals and other original sources. On the other hand, there is this amazing book in the series "*The Butterflies of Venezuela*" written and published by Andrew Neild. The second volume of *Butterflies of Venezuela* includes information on 196 species of butterflies, which does not seem to be a high number however it includes 8 new species and an unbelievable number (91) of new subspecies. There are about 450 figures of types, comprehensive information on ecology and distribution and information on larval stages if anything is known about them. The book is well organised and the first sec-

tion contains a very short introduction and explanations. The largest, second part, presents detailed accounts of all the species and subspecies. The third section presents a large amount of detailed information on the types and figured specimens, and includes corrections and additions to the previous volume. A large part of the book is devoted to colour plates of the butterflies. In comparison with that in other similar books the bibliography is very good.

There is little further that one can say about this magnificent work. I am unable to say if there are any errors or misidentification of any of the species or other problems. I have only one small comment. I do not agree that the majority of species can be identified from the plates alone. Of course the author is right, but an untrained eye may misidentify even distinct species. I would therefore have preferred the author to have used more arrows to indicate the discriminating characters, especially when they are not on the wings, but on antennae or abdomen etc.

The second volume of "*The Butterflies of Venezuela*" is a must for anybody interested in Neotropical butterflies. I only hope that after the announced plan to publish four volumes in this series, covering all the Nymphalidae, Pieridae and Papilionidae, the author (or somebody else) will eventually publish volumes on other butterfly families – Hesperidae, Lycaenidae and Riodinidae, and possibly also the Hedylidae.

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