



VIEWS AND REVIEWS

of books, publications, products and services

Butterflies of South West Scotland: An Atlas of their Distribution by Keith Futter, Richard Sutcliffe, David Welham, Anne Welham, A. John Rostron, Jessie MacKay, Neil Gregory, Jim McCleary, T. Norman Tait, Jim Black & Paul Kirkland. Argyll Publishing, 2006. 106 pp., c.150 colour photos. Hbk. ISBN 1-902831-95-0. £12.99.

This is an excellent little book, summarising the results of butterfly surveying in south-west Scotland between 1995 and 2004. The records have already been published in the *Millennium Atlas of Butterflies in Britain and Ireland* (Asher *et al.*, Oxford University Press 2001), and a further 222,570 records for 2000–2004 have been included in *The State of Butterflies in Britain and Ireland* (Fox *et al.*, Pisces Publications 2006), but this volume presents a more detailed analysis of butterfly distribution and abundance in the area, providing additional insights into a range of local subjects.

The first thing to understand is that this is not the Yellow Pages' idea of south-west Scotland (Dumfries & Galloway), nor even my own long-held idea of south-west Scotland (western Dumfries-shire, Galloway and part of south Ayrshire). This is Butterfly Conservation's own peculiar idea of south-west Scotland that includes 13 vice-counties, stretching from Coll and Tiree to Gretna Green, by way of Greater Glasgow and Stirlingshire. The book thus covers about a third of Scotland.

For the core section there are two pages devoted to each of the 32 main species, including two maps for each species (one showing distribution and one showing abundance). The maps show records at 5km square resolution (a higher resolution than the two atlases mentioned above). For each species there is an excellent phenogram with warmer colours highlighting the main local emergence period. The text includes sections on identification, lifecycle, habitat and distribution, and there is a brief statement on current status.

A large part of the book is devoted to other topics, including a history of the Glasgow and South West Scotland branch of Butterfly

Conservation, celebrating its twentieth anniversary with this very publication. Recording and survey methods, occasional visitors, aberrant behaviour, unusual colour variants, trends, peat bogs under threat, and the importance of wild and garden flowers are all given a few pages each. At the back of the book there is a guide to over 40 of the best butterfly sites in the area—mostly those with easy access. Grid references, habitat descriptions, butterfly species to look out for and guidelines on parking make this a useful addition to the book, though it could easily have been expanded upon.

A further enhancement are the 150 photographs of butterflies, habitats and branch outings, which are all of excellent quality; though the reproduction is rather dark it is not enough to spoil the book.

Do you really need this book when *The State of Butterflies in Britain and Ireland* at £9.00 gives a wider overview of recent changes in butterfly distribution for the same period? If you live in the area, or intend to visit, it is certainly worth having because of the higher resolution in the mapping and the extra local detail. At £12.99 (with proceeds going to Butterfly Conservation) I thought that it was very good value.

Richard Mearns

The Butterflies of Yorkshire edited by Howard M. Frost. Butterfly Conservation Yorkshire, 2005. 310 pp., colour throughout. Sbk. ISBN 0-9548249-0-3. £30

Very informative chapters on landscape, entomological history, recording distribution, butterfly plants, conservation and weather precede the individual species accounts. The chapter on weather is particularly interesting, containing a chart showing a generalised view of annual weather from 1800–1999; each year in this period details any memorable butterfly events and, perhaps less relevant but outrageously amusing, randomly picked world-wide happenings, from the death of Charles Dickens to the invention of the basketball!

The individual species accounts cover the 36 species resident or regularly occurring in Yorkshire; this section runs to 182 pages, which means that on average each species is allotted five pages—enough to cover just about everything one needs to know about that butterfly in Yorkshire. Three distribution maps are provided: a tetrad map and a 10km square map relating to Yorkshire, and an outline map of the British Isles showing the national distribution with the Yorkshire dots in a darker colour. The text comprehensively covers status, distribution, life history and much more; each chapter is beautifully illustrated with drawings or photographs of habitats, adults and sometimes larval or other stages.

The remainder of the book focuses with equal thoroughness on those species now believed to be extinct or to have occurred in the County as a result of migration. I cannot praise this book too highly and I congratulate the illustrators and the team of erudite writers who have together produced an outstanding volume on butterflies.

Bernard Skinner

Nationalnycklen til Sveriges Flora och Fauna: Dagfjärar (National Encyclopedia of Sweden's Flora and Fauna: Butterflies) by C. U. Eliasson, N. Ryrholm & U. Gärdenfors. Apollo Books, 2005. 407 pp. Hbk. ISBN 91-88506-51-7. DKK 280.

This rather attractive book is the first in a planned series covering the Swedish flora and fauna. Most of the text is written in the Swedish language, which the reviewer is unable to read. However, judging from the good quality photographs, drawings and charts that litter the opening section, the introduction is fairly comprehensive, containing illustrated details of crypsis, external morphology, early stages, wing venation (it is slightly disconcerting to see the wing outer margin referred to as *utkant/ytterkant!*), etc. It is interesting to see major aberrations of Scarce Heath *Coenonympha hero* and Heath Fritillary *Melitaea athalia* photographed in nature. A series of more than 20 very nice habitat photographs are useful, but would have benefited from being a little larger.

There follows a systematic species list of butterflies accepted as Swedish, but despite the title the distribution maps actually cover the whole of Scandinavia, and some species included apparently only occur outside Sweden. Scientific names and local (Scandinavian) names are provided here, but no authors or dates of publication. Dual language (Swedish and English) keys to the butterflies follow, but are largely superfluous in separating the majority of taxa (the good quality illustrations are more useful to a beginner) and rather optimistic in expecting to differentiate species of, for example, *Pyrgus* skippers in just a few words. Nomenclature, often arbitrary in modern popular texts, is less confusing than in some recent works.

The bulk of the text concerns species accounts of all the butterflies accepted by the authors as occurring in the region. This is almost all in the Swedish language, but has a short 'key facts' section in English, including brief description, habitat, host plant and time of appearance accompanying each species entry. Paintings scattered through the text depict each butterfly, often considerably larger than life-sized. These paintings are of a high standard and, in the opinion of the reviewer, rank among the best butterfly artistry anywhere in Europe.

It has not been possible for the reviewer to assess the accuracy of the text, but that of the short English sections varies. Most appear accurate, but some are rather questionable and others inaccurate. For example (p. 365), it is said of the Monarch *Danaus plexippus* that "... larvae on Canary Islands and in Spain feed on *Gossypium arboreum*, *Euphorbia* spp. and *Convolvulus* spp. ...". In fact the usual larval host plants on the Canaries (and in many other places, including Spain and Portugal) are species of *Asclepias*, notably *A. curassavica*, and *Gomphocarpus fruticosus*. Ackery & Vane-Wright, in their 1984 work *Milkweed Butterflies: their Cladistics and Biology*, considered a report of *plexippus* feeding on a *Euphorbia* species doubtful and did not record any *Convolvulus* species as a *plexippus* host plant anywhere in the butterfly's worldwide range. Also (p. 185) the pierid butterfly historically referred to as *Colias nastes werdandi* Zett., 1840 is correctly treated as having species rank, but *C. nastes* (Boisd., 1832) seems to be placed as a junior synonym of *werdandi*.

A section of large colourful maps towards the end of the book (smaller maps are incorporated with each species account) illustrate known distributions of each species, many of which have been extended since the work of, for example, Henriksen & Kreutzer's *Butterflies of Scandinavia in Nature* in 1982. The references are strong on Scandinavian authors.

Clearly its value is limited for someone who does not understand the language, but this substantial book (it is a large, heavy volume) is nevertheless nicely presented, features excellent illustrations and is reasonably priced.

John Tennent

The Dragonflies of Northamptonshire by Mark Tyrrell. Northants Dragonfly Group, 2006. 80pp., numerous colour photographs. Sbk. ISBN [978-] 0-9552340-0-2. £14.95 inc. p&p., from Mark Tyrrell, 8 Warwick Close, Raunds, Northants, NN9 6JH (email mark.p.tyrrell@ntlworld.com).

Increasing knowledge of Britain's dragonfly fauna has seen a number of county dragonfly atlases published over the last few years. As a county where the background of historical information is considerably less than some, it is good to see this publication, which finally puts Northamptonshire 'on the map'. The book contains a brief introduction to dragonflies and to dragonfly recording, along with slightly longer sections on habitats in Northamptonshire and on County conservation issues. The final two thirds of the book are devoted to detailed coverage of the 26 species that have been recorded from the County. Each species has a brief introductory 'field notes' section, as well as summaries of County status and conservation issues, habitat preference and distribution within the County. Distributions (with associated maximum recorded numbers) are mapped at the 1km level on a map that also shows the main rivers, and a phenological diagram shows frequency of records against date.

This is a sound and well-presented publication that contains much useful local information. Northamptonshire is strategically well-placed to monitor the expansion of several species that are currently increasing in abundance or expanding in range, e.g. White-legged Damselfly *Platycnemis pennipes*, Small Red-eyed Damselfly *Erythromma viridulum* and Scarce

Chaser *Libellula fulva*. There is thus much of broader interest, and with the extensive range of high quality photographs there is much to recommend it. Proceeds from the sale of this atlas will be used to promote dragonfly conservation within the County.

Adrian Parr

Hoverflies of Northwest Europe by M.P. van Veen. KNNV Publishing, 2004. 254 pp., 803 text figures. Hbk. ISBN 90-5011-199-8. 34.95 (+ p&p) from the publisher.

Hoverflies form a compact and accessible group for people wishing to start the study of Diptera (although they also contain a few genera that are amongst the most difficult and frustrating in British entomology). *British Hoverflies*, published by the BENHS over 20 years ago, produced an upsurge of interest in these flies, which has resulted in regular reprints and revisions of the original book, as well as the production of a provisional distribution atlas (Ball & Morris 2000, *Provisional Atlas of British Hoverflies*, BRC) and more specialist literature. *Hoverflies of Northwest Europe* continues this tradition, but covers a larger geographical area (from the North Pole to northern France and from Ireland to the German/Polish border) and about twice as many species (c.500) as we have in Britain. The coverage is stated to be nearly two-thirds of the total known European fauna, and exclusion of the Mediterranean component has allowed the book to be kept to a compact size.

The subtitle is *Identification keys to the Syrphidae*, and these keys form the bulk of the text. There are short sections of introduction, notes on finding hoverflies, how to use the keys, and information on how to collect and preserve specimens (this is particularly important since accurate determination to species level demands the microscopic examination of dead specimens). There is a key to genera and separate keys to the species of each genus. The keys to species include a brief introduction to each genus, giving such information as the habitats where species are found, adult behaviour, larval habitats, and anatomical peculiarities of the genus in question. Once the species has been reached there is a summary that includes the size range of the fly and its broad geographical

distribution, but there is no further information on individual species.

For some species these keys are clearly better than Stubbs & Falk (*British Hoverflies*, BENHS 2002); for example, *Sphegina sibirica* where the reduced first sternite is misleadingly, if not incorrectly, described in the British work. Other keys where structural characters take preference over colour also work better in this book, *Xylota* being a case in point. More importantly, a number of additional characters have been used which, together with the species often keying out in a different order, means that the two works complement each other. The keys are perhaps more thorough than Stubbs & Falk, which sometimes tries to be too simple. Like the British work, the keys are copiously illustrated and the figures are adjacent to the couplets they illustrate.

A large number of individuals have assisted the author by supplying specimens, testing the keys, and by checking the English (which is not the author's first language). Despite this there are still a few problems. Parts of the body are not always consistently named. For example, both metatarsus and basitarsus are used for the first tarsal segment, also anepisternum and anepisternite, tarsus and tars, thoracic dorsum and thoracic scutum.

There are also a few problems with the keys. In the case of *Xanthandrus/Pyrophaena* (generic key) female *P. granditarsa* has quite a broad abdomen and couplet 6a might be better worded "at least twice as long as wide". My *Pyrophaena* have wings distinctly longer than their abdomina, contradicting the statement in

7b. In the *Neoascia/Sphegina* generic key there is also a problem: in *Sphegina*, although the abdomen is clearly petiolate it is only segment 2 that is narrowed—3 and 4 are about the same width. *Eristalis tenax* is separated (couplet 2, p. 98) from other species by the eyes having "2 distinct bands of hair", the other species "without bands of hair"—the implication is that these are the only hairs, whereas all the species have hairy eyes but in *tenax* the hairs are denser in the position of the bands.

Some of the keys also suffer from incorrect numbering, although in most cases this is fairly obvious. In fact the author is ahead of the game here and has published a list of these errors, together with revised keys where additional species have been discovered, on his website—<http://home.hccnet.nl/mp.van.veen/boekhoverflies.html>.

There is a combined index/distribution table, though the species are listed in generic order with no synonymy. This can cause confusion as the generic assignment differs somewhat from the British usage. It might have been useful to state that there is still considerable disagreement on the higher level classification of the Syrphidae.

Overall this is a useful, well-produced and reasonably priced book, which is highly recommended. Even if your interest only extends to British hoverflies it will sit comfortably alongside Stubbs & Falk (it's even the same size). If you intend to visit north-western Europe it is essential reading.

Graham A. Collins