

## BOOK REVIEW

**Antonio R. Pérez-Asso, Julio A. Genaro, and Orlando H. Garrido (2009).  
Butterflies of Puerto Rico - Las Mariposas de Puerto Rico**

English/Spanish; Paperback, 140 pages; 11 x 8.5 x 0.5 inches; 1.6 pounds, price: US \$31. Publisher: Editorial Cocuyo, Puerto Rico; ISBN-10: 0982238800; ISBN-13: 978-0982238806

Growing up on a Caribbean island has made me more appreciative of the difficulty in acquiring books that speak to the fauna of this region. Especially lacking are books devoted to particular faunal groups. The impression most people will get from the obvious void of Caribbean faunal literature is that there is not much to write about. On the contrary, the Caribbean, being one of the world's hotspots for biodiversity, is ripe with a vast array of stunning fauna and flora. It is surprising that more has not been written, but the tide seems to have been turning, if only slowly and for only a few select groups. In recent years several faunal books and websites devoted to Caribbean fauna have emerged, and so it was with great excitement that I met the recent news that *Las Mariposas de Puerto Rico / Butterflies of Puerto Rico* had been published. You can imagine my even greater glee when I was asked to write a review of a book that was written by three accomplished biologists, Antonio R. Perez-Asso, Julio A. Genaro, and Orlando H. Garrido.

When I first get a book I am excited to read, the very first thing I do, even before I look at the table of contents, is to read the introduction by the author(s). In my opinion, this sets the tone for how a book is received and reduces my inherent biases in the subject area when I understand the audience for which said book is written. It was not different in this case and to my delight the authors seemed to be targeting the very group that will impact the future. The hope that was expressed of stimulating further study and conservation of such beautiful and delicate creatures will be met if this book gets into the hands of the masses, its apparent target audience. The price of this excellent book may be the only obstacle to the fruition of these goals.

One of the strong points of this book is the many images it uses. Almost every page that the reader turns introduces one to well placed images dealing with butterfly ecology. This, along with the clarity of the text, makes it a welcome read for any person, be they an accomplished lepidopterist or an inexperienced parent feeding the hunger of a questioning child. Caution should be expressed to readers who are advanced in the field of butterfly biology that this book should not be regarded as an attempt to be a comprehensive scientific text, even though it deals with a wide array of topics related to the 102 butterflies found on Puerto Rico, such as mimicry, puddling, basking, threats to butterflies, butterfly gardening and so on. It is an excellent introduction to Lepidoptera biology and the butterfly fauna of Puerto Rico for a beginner or amateur lepidopterist.

A second strong point of this book is that it is bilingual. This opens up the text to two of the largest language groups around the world, but more importantly, populations of Spanish and English speakers in Puerto Rico and the Caribbean. This

very good attribute, however, may be the cause of a few nuances in language differences. The use of the word "Ninfalids" as opposed to Nymphalids is one such nuance; another is the use of the word "pores" instead of spiracles. Also, the authors regard moths as nocturnal butterflies, while one could easily argue that butterflies are diurnal moths – but I digress. Being a native English speaker, it became obvious to me before reading the acknowledgements, that this book was written originally in Spanish and then translated to English. All in all, I think John Guarnaccia did a superb job of translating the text and any nuances should not be seen as a reflection of his ability.

After reading the first 10 short chapters of this book, I was pleasantly surprised to find detailed information on the host plants of the butterflies of Puerto Rico and a checklist of the butterflies of Puerto Rico and adjacent islands. I was equally surprised, but a little confused, as to why the chapter on how to identify butterflies was left till now, as opposed to being right after the first or second chapter. To me, this would have flowed better with the text. The chapter itself was again very easy to read and packed with useful information, following well with the overall theme of the book.

Yes, there is more! Reading this review, you may think that the book ends soon but with the book in hand you will soon realize that more than one-third of this book is the appendix. This is where descriptions, distribution and images of the species are given. Of note is that some of the images in this section lack good resolution and the yellow of some seemed a little more ochreous than the specimens should look to the naked eye, but this could be caused from images being retouched before production. The main disappointment for me, other than the fact that the descriptions of the species were too short, was that the distributions of the species presented were not mapped as to which Caribbean islands they also occurred in, even though a list was provided. The key presented was only useful at the family level; a genus key (if not species) would be so much more educational.

I strongly recommend this book to any person interested in Caribbean fauna, be they a child, a parent trying to keep up with an energetic child, a grade school teacher, a college lecturer, or your eccentric cousin who knows all about butterflies and has a basement full of drawers of Lepidoptera. If you are none of these persons but enjoy reading, whether you speak Spanish or English, *Las Mariposas de Puerto Rico / Butterflies of Puerto Rico* is the book for you. I would consider myself a seasoned lepidopterist and I thoroughly enjoyed this read. You will as well.

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