

BOOK REVIEW

Insects in Colour, edited by N. D. Riley. Blandford Press Ltd., London. 1963. Pp. 116. 10s 6d or \$2.25.

In reviewing this undeniably attractive little hard-backed book, comparison is inevitable with the paper-backed '*Insects*' in the Golden Nature Guide series. In my view '*Insects*' comes out best on the bases of background, coverage, organization and presentation of the subject, size and detail of the illustrations, format, and price.

'*Insects in Colour*' strikes me as an attempt to cash in on a book already produced for one smallish market by altering it for another. The results are probably better in other books of the same series, covering larger organisms such as: fungi, flowers, shrubs and trees, economic plants, indoor plants, dogs, roses, and wild animals. Here and there the book reveals its international origin. It was first published in Sweden, then in Denmark, then in England and printed in Holland. Although not unidiomatic the writing suffers from inconsistencies and neglect of critical proof reading. There is mention of Ternites and Scone flies and errors such as accept for except, secret for secrete, and figuris for figures. In descriptions most of the insects are named normally, as aphid, fly, wasp or moth, but sometimes capitals creep in to give Click-beetle and Soldier-beetle, Caddis Fly, Water Boatman, Aphid or even *Aphis* used not in the generic sense. In host plants stinging nettles appear with and without capitals on the same page. There is hop, currant, willow; but Tussock Grass, Sorrel, Potato, Cabbage, and Giant Water Dock.

The scales of measurement are hybrid. Length, or 'length from head to tail' is in mm except for Lepidoptera, Diptera and some Hymenoptera, in which the expanse, or sometimes 'wingspread' or even 'wing spread'

is in inches. Even the type face is sometimes non-uniform; The Clouded Border Brindle has an expanse of $1\frac{1}{2}$ - $1\frac{9}{10}$ inches (*sic*) which is untidy and no clearer than 38-50 mm. It is necessary to turn from the picture to the description each time to find the size of an insect.

There are 64 full pages in color and these are very fine, covering 260 species. The printing is adequate and the quality of the colors particularly good. But up to 11 species are on a single page which means that the reduction is so great that detail is lost from wings, tarsi and antennae.

The English names of Lepidoptera are intriguing, perhaps because of the lack of uniformity. The article is placed before some names but not others, and the term moth or butterfly is often missing. Thus names such as Broom Moth, Winter Moth, or Codling Moth hardly rate a second look, but The Dunbar, The Feathered Gothic, The Shark, and The Claddagh certainly do. Then there is something called a Great Brocade (expanse $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches), a Heart and Dart, and best of all, a Setaceous Hebrew Character.

A good deal of information is packed into the short and somewhat telegraphic descriptions of each species. Surprisingly, controls are given for two or three pest species but not for major ones.

The representation is good, even though large forms are emphasized, and includes: 84 Lepidoptera, 81 Coleoptera (13 longicorns), 31 Hymenoptera, 26 Diptera, 12 Hemiptera-Homoptera, 6 Orthoptera, and one or two each of 10 other Orders. This is said to be about 1.3% of the 20,000 known species in the U.K. Protective resemblance and mimicry are illustrated with five examples, and migrants and casual visitors with six. No less than 202 of the species were named by Linnaeus. A quarter

of them are found only in southern England or are listed as rare in northern England and Scotland, which must limit the usefulness of the book as a reference.

The introduction, on p. 69, consists of four full pages of close and forbiddingly unbroken print, since the paragraphs are not indented. There

is an index and a bibliography of 16 good English titles. It is hard to know for whom the book is intended, however. The dust jacket says it is a handy reference and a useful introduction, but it strikes me as too elementary for a reference and too pedantic for an introduction.

—H. R. MacCarthy

BOOK REVIEW

The Skippers of the Genus Hesperia in Western North America, With Special Reference to California (Lepidoptera: Hesperidae) by C. Don MacNeill. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1964. Pp. 221. \$5.00.

This work, Volume 35 of the University of California publications in Entomology, presents a meticulous taxonomic treatment of the western members of North American *Hesperia* besides lucid discussions on some phases of their biology based on "— intimate observation for a limited time upon a limited portion of the fauna." Although the book is chiefly of interest to certain specialists in taxonomy, ecologists and others concerned with biogeographic distribution (11 pp.) and behaviour of adult insects (18 pp.) will find good meat within the section on Biology.

The taxonomy is based on examination of more than 500 ova and 200 larvae and pupae of nine western and two eastern species. Over 7,500 adult specimens were studied representing all known North American species. Details and data on specimens, techniques and methods are fully documented. There are 9

range maps; 28 pages of good diagrammatic drawings of larval setal patterns, pupae, antennae, and genitalia; a coloured frontispiece of adults of one species and three subspecies not previously illustrated; and 8 plates of photographs. All these are satisfactory but some of the black and white photographs do not measure up to the general high standard of the book. The writing is polished; the single error noted is that insidious old acquaintance 'data was' used once.

Proof reading was excellent although there are minor errors in the spelling of a couple of British Columbia place names. Faulty labels and failure to consult a gazetteer are sand traps for uncounted taxonomists.

At the end of the book are 258 references by 170 authors dating from 1793 to 1962. Greatly increasing the value of this list is a brief summary of each reference.

The only major disappointment is that there is no indication that material was submitted to a cytogeneticist for examination; apart from this single omission, the book is a model for emulation.

—D. A. Ross