

Book Review

Ernestino MARAVALHAS (ed.): *As borboletas de Portugal* [in Portuguese]. viii + 455 pp. Distributed by Apollo Books, Stenstrup (Denmark). 2003. Price: DKK 320.00 (= approx. € 40.00) plus postage. ISBN 972-96031-9-7.

Butterfly books are now available for most regions and countries in the world. They range in scope from popular picture books designed for nature lovers to scientific monographs of regional faunas. Now a new butterfly book on the fauna of Portugal is on the European market. Written mostly by E. Maravalhas, contributions come also from a variety of other authors. The book starts with a series of introductory chapters, e.g. on arthropods in general, on the evolution, life-cycles, and natural enemies of butterflies, on habitats, conservation or migration, but also on methods for the study of butterflies (monitoring, mapping, population genetics). These chapters are useful for readers who are not (yet) familiar with entomology. The main part of the book are the richly illustrated species accounts (one page per species), separately presented for the mainland Portuguese fauna and the Macaronesian islands. Twenty-seven colour plates of set specimens facilitate identification. Various indexes, a references list, a glossary, and English translations of figure captions complete the book. The full text is also available on the web <http://www.tagis.net> for download and translation. A fair rating of the book against the many other available books on European butterflies requires to consider the particular readership which the authors aimed to address. For certain, the book will find many readers among Portuguese nature lovers, and it deserves to be used by all organizations and authorities concerned with nature conservation in that country or in neighbouring Spain. However, the book will be of only marginal interest to a wider international audience. The use of Portuguese language does not seem to be a major obstacle, since brief English abstracts are provided to all chapters (although one might have wished these to be somewhat more extensive and presenting more data). The colour plates do not reach the high standards the butterfly community is now used to, and occasionally very worn specimens are depicted (this does not facilitate safe identification). While many illustrations in the species accounts are excellent, quite a number are suspect of showing anaesthetised (if not killed) specimens in 'pseudo-natural' positions. The maps provide schematic sketches of distributions in Portugal (as opposed to dot maps of true records). While such schematic maps may still be informative, point or grid maps are much more valuable for all those who wish to use distributional data for subsequent analyses. Quite a number of hostplant affiliations seem to be simply perpetuated from earlier literature without critical re-evaluation, and some are suspect of being wrong. To give but one example, I am unaware of any populations of the lycaenid butterfly *Polyommatus bellargus* feeding on *Trifolium* species. A number of citations in the text did not lead me to a reference in the bibliographic list. Overall, the book leaves a mixed impression. For butterfly enthusiasts or decision makers from the Iberian Peninsula this will be a valuable source of information. From a more international perspective, probably only few lepidopterists with special interest in the Iberian fauna will find this volume to be of sufficient interest, since there is rather little information to be gained in comparison to other recent books on European butterflies.