

I recommend this book to researchers, teachers, politicians and people generally interested in conservation. This is a fine book about conservation issues for scientists, but I am frustrated because I suspect this book is only going to reach the converted. It generally lacks suggestions on how to reach the vast majority of Australasians who do not recognize the urgency of the problem. We must all do what we can to educate the oblivious about the obvious, but immediate laws are required to prevent further habitat destruction.

Saunders (chapter 6) mentions the need to ban clearing of native vegetation, but legislation to control clearing has proven difficult to enact or enforce. We cannot rely on legislation, or more science or hope for a sudden elevation in awareness among people to solve our environmental problems. As conservation biologists, we must become more involved in promoting conservation and educating the community. This book gives us some of the information we need, and some ideas as to how to proceed. It is now up to you.

---

## A Field Guide to Australian Butterflies

Robert Fisher, 1995  
Surrey Beatty & Sons, Chipping Norton, NSW.  
254 pp, ISBN 0 949324 52 3.  
RRP A\$29.95.

DAMON OLIVER<sup>1</sup>

ROBERT Fisher believes that an increased awareness about conserving the remaining unique biota of Australia has created a desire in many people to identify and understand the biology of organisms. *A Field Guide to Australian Butterflies* is a useful way to impart such biological information to those who wish to explore the natural world around them. The objective of this field guide is to provide a book of photographs which aid in the identification and appreciation of some two hundred Australian butterfly species, about half of the total described species in this country. The field guide provides a brief but adequate introduction explaining the classification, life histories, morphology and geographic distribution of Australian butterflies. It is then divided into sections corresponding to the six families of butterflies represented in Australia. Each section gives a brief overview of the unique morphological characters, geographic distribution and life cycle of that family. A noteworthy feature of this guide is the inclusion of several pages of excellent photographs of early life stages at the beginning of each family section. Ideally, though, it would have been desirable to have photographs of the early life stages for all species presented, to complement the adult photographs.

There is, however, a description of the non-adult stages for every species, and information about which host plant species these are likely to be found on. This not only helps those who are interested in knowing what species the egg, larval or pupal stage belongs to, but also provides ideas about what plant species to grow in the garden to attract butterflies. The butterfly species presented in the guide were chosen because of their common distribution across the continent. There are also some less common species included to illustrate their exquisite beauty. Amateur entomologists who are unfamiliar with complicated terminology, used by professionals, will find this book easy to use. Only very basic morphological terminology is used to separate the different families and these terms are well defined in the glossary. Identification of species is achieved by referring to the colour photographs of the adult specimens which are generally very clear and well presented. Photographs in the "Swallowtail" family are particularly impressive, inspiring one to journey to the tropics in search of the gorgeous Cooktown Birdwing and Red Bodied Swallowtail. This is a relatively small field guide and there is a ready niche for a slightly larger version which includes all 385 species. The geographic distribution of each species would have been better presented in map form rather than written description. Minor criticisms aside, this field guide is an easy way for amateur and professional naturalists to familiarize themselves with the biology of butterflies. This would be a very good book for budding young entomologists and one would hope to see more field guides of this nature produced for other insect orders in the future.

---

<sup>1</sup>Departments of Ecosystem Management and Zoology, University of New England, Armidale, New South Wales, Australia 2351.