

The Butterflies of Venezuela, Part 2: Nymphalidae II (Acraeinae, Libytheinae, Nymphalinae, Ithomiinae, Morphinae).

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THE BUTTERFLIES OF VENEZUELA, PART 2: NYMPHALIDAE II (ACRAEINAE, LIBYTHEINAE, NYMPHALINAE, ITHOMIINAE, MORPHINAE). By Andrew F.E. Neild, 2008; 275 pages, 84 color plates, hardcover. Meridian Publications, London. ISBN 978-0-9527657-1-4. Available directly from the author at <http://thebutterfliesofvenezuela.com/>, price £ 110 plus shipping, charged through PayPal. Also available at <http://www.nhbs.com/> for £ 134 plus shipping.

Skillfully composed and beautifully illustrated, *The Butterflies of Venezuela* Part 2 provides 196 species accounts for butterflies classified in 55 genera and five nymphalid groups. Both the plates and the text are printed in glossy paper, a beautiful presentation indeed. This book maintains the format, style and classification used in the first volume of this four-part series. Although justified given the everlasting instability of nymphalid systematics, readers should bear in mind that the classification used in this series will be obsolete by the time the fourth volume goes to press. Part 2 departs from Part 1 by having invited contributors. Phil DeVries wrote a foreword, Angel Vilorio provided a general introduction, Francisco Romero co-authored the species accounts for *Actinote*, Niklas Wahlberg and Andrés Orellana wrote introductions to the Nymphalinae and the tribe Antirrheini, respectively. This gave *The Butterflies of Venezuela* Part 2 a hint of spice.

Among the 196 species accounts, eight are descriptions of new species: *Actinote ballettae* Neild & Romero, *Actinote alberti* Neild & Romero and *Actinote romeroi* Neild & Costa (Acraeinae), *Oleria boyeri* Neild, *Pagyris renelichyi* Neild, *Pteronymia alicia* Neild, *Pteronymia peteri* Neild and *Greta clavijoi* Neild (Ithomiinae). Ninety-one new subspecies are described, too many to list here, and one neotype and six lectotypes are designated. Species and subspecies descriptions follow the same format as in Part 1, and line drawings of genitalia are given for all new species and some new subspecies. Two small technical comments might be in order. First, in contrast to all other aspects of this book, the genitalia drawings seem overly simple and without much detail. Second, for general accessibility and convenience I prefer to see the descriptions of new taxa published in primary literature. For a minimal cost researchers often use library services to request articles that include species descriptions where text and photographs of type specimens appear on sequential pages. In this book the specimen photographs in the plates are widely

separated from the description, thus making it a little more difficult to order a complete species description through library services.

The text provides a measure of the author's growth between Parts 1 and 2. It is clear that in addressing tricky groups such as acraeines and ithomiines Neild was especially conscientious of the groundwork required for species identifications (examining series of specimens in several museums, making genitalic preparations, consulting with experts, etc). The species accounts in Part 2 are detailed and more maturely composed than in Part 1, and include personal reports and numerous literature citations dating back to the 1800's; true scholarship revealed. For instance, within three and a half pages, the account for *Morpho telemachus* (Linnaeus, 1758) discusses the Venezuelan subspecies *liliana* and *iphichus*, their variation, ranges, and differences between them and the nominal subspecies from the Guianas. It compares also their genitalia to similar species, and provides illustrations. One and a half pages are devoted to the habits and host plants of *telemachus*; to my knowledge the most detailed account ever written for this species. At the other end of the spectrum lies *Patricia deryllidas* (Hewitson, 1864) with its 16 line-long species account. Do not fret: in few words Neild provides the means for identification of this species, starting simply with the descriptor "unmistakable". We then find that little is known about *deryllidas*, and a call for further studies is left between the lines.

The color plates are impeccable. Multiple life-size illustrations are used to show dorsal and ventral color patterns of males and females, color variation, and transparency when appropriate. The 1,451 photographs have been processed extremely well, nicely organized and beautifully printed. This is particularly important for the identification of difficult groups such as acraeines or ithomiines. Photographs of type specimens are marked with red acronyms (e.g., HT, for holotype) making them easily recognizable. All plates were prepared with economy of space, even the largest of the *Morpho* species, which are tastefully staggered in plates 44–48.

Andrew Neild's series, *The Butterflies of Venezuela*, opens windows into this biologically rich country, and presents the reader with life-size photographs (almost as good as having a specimen in hand) and a wealth of information on butterflies. The series is testimony to Neild's dedication to fieldwork, interactions with researchers and enthusiasts, visits to museums and

private collections, photography, and countless hours spent studying and writing. It gives one pleasure to consult *The Butterflies of Venezuela* series because both volumes have been prepared with great care. In the 13-year gap between the publication of Parts 1 and 2 we have seen increasing demand for more numerous, shorter, and more rapidly published contributions at the expense of detail and scholarship. *The Butterflies of Venezuela* series does not bend to such demand. On the contrary, it emulates the best of the traditional

catalogs, yet it is modern. Clearly Neild's efforts were focused on making Part 2 as thorough and complete as possible. It shows. This outstanding book should be on every lepidopterist's shelf.

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