

Saturniidae Mundi: Saturniid Moths of the World, Part II

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SATURNIIDAE MUNDI: SATURNIID MOTHS OF THE WORLD, PART II, by Bernard d'Abrera. 182 pages; text in English; 10.5 × 14 inches, hardbound; ISBN: 978-0-947352-24-7; US\$340.00; Hill House Publishers, Melbourne & London. Publication date: October 2012.

A large book depicting hundreds of color images of African Saturniidae has recently been published. Bernard d'Abrera's Part II of *Saturniidae Mundi* has finally appeared, after Part I was published in 1995 and Part III in 1998. However, d'Abrera published several more butterfly books between these, so the delay is not because he was idle or slow. In this volume, we find the African saturniids, as well as the genera *Salassa* (tropical Asia) and *Antheraea* (Asian and American), the Hemileucinae that were missing from Part I, such as the genera *Cerodirphia*, *Polythysana*, *Ormiscodes*, *Dirphia*, *Periphoba*, *Meroleuca*, *Molippa*, and a few more. The generally large and colorful *Argema* and *Epiphora* were treated in Part III with their nearest relatives, but all other African genera are in Part II. The book is the same large format as d'Abrera's other volumes on butterflies and larger moths with flawless life-size images against a light background. Photographs of several lepidopterists, primarily Saturniidae specialists, are provided in an early section. Additionally, there are eleven photographs showing habitats in tropical America and Africa, plus a series of photographs showing *Opodiphthera eucalypti* from egg to mature larva, and then an excellent sequence of the emergence from its cocoon to a fully expanded adult, revealing d'Abrera's skill at photographing *living* Lepidoptera.

Anyone using this book will be able to put a species name on most African saturniid specimens, or assign them to the correct genus. That said, most of the Afro-tropical saturniid fauna is in taxonomic disarray, meaning most of the genera need to be revised or defined, and as a result, the book inevitably contains some misspellings, incorrect citations of authorships, a small number of misidentified figures, and taxonomic errors. In spite of this, the book will remain an important reference for the African Saturniidae and the genera *Antheraea* and *Salassa* long into the future. D'Abrera's figures of type specimens are valuable for helping formulate taxonomic hypotheses for species and names of which I have no material to study. Further, d'Abrera is the first author to appreciate the significance of artificial selection and artificial dispersal for sericulture when dealing with the taxonomy of *Antheraea*.

The author has not minced words in his assessment of the work by some amateurs who own (i.e., self-publish) and operate synonym factories. He has synonymized or ignored many of these names, and I concur with his taxonomic decisions in this regard. In other cases he is more conservative by questioning the validity of certain genera and species, where I would have synonymized them. D'Abrera provides detailed discussions of his taxonomic and scientific viewpoints, and I would like to focus briefly on his views about the mtDNA-barcoding technique, which has unfortunately been misused and misinterpreted by some lepidopterists that are eager to name new species, or by others who cannot consider the biology of moths outside the blinders called the biological species concept. I share d'Abrera's disdain for this situation, and I was glad to see that he quoted me on page 118 when I wrote to him about this: The misuse of this methodology is "the betrayal of Linnaeus' vision to bring clarity to the natural world." In recent years, a few amateurs have proposed and self-published several hundreds of names for what they believe to be real species of Saturniidae, and qualified taxonomists will have a huge mess to clean up in future revisions. Genetics and reproductive biology aside, their writings are also an affront to the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature. These amateurs were apparently given no guidance or accountability on how to use the data, and they obviously have a minimal understanding of systematics.

Bernard d'Abrera is not only one of the most prolific publishers on Lepidoptera of our time, but he stands unique (as far as I know) in presenting engaging narratives for readers who consider themselves to be critical thinkers. He was formally trained in the history and philosophy of science, and as such, attempts to hold science accountable to the rules of philosophy. Whether one agrees or disagrees with his views, d'Abrera actually challenges his readers to think.

Saturniidae Mundi, Part II is a significant and valuable resource for those who study Saturniidae, and will be a sheer pleasure to use by all who collect and rear saturniids. I highly recommend this book, and I hope many copies will be purchased by libraries.

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