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The Encyclopedia of Butterflies

John Feltwell

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A colorful photographic reference focusing on the more than one thousand most common butterfly species provides detailed information on size and appearance, habitat, geographical range, life cycle, migratory habits, and food. Nature Bk Soc.

From BooklistThe success or failure of butterfly populations is now recognized as an indicator of an ecosystem's health. In this beautiful book, Feltwell devotes a chapter to the state of butterfly populations and the pressures on their

habitats. The destruction of habitats is not the only threat; prize butterfly specimens command \$1,000 or more. This survey presentation for the amateur or professional lepidopterist can be used with pleasure by the general reader. A brief chapter includes an explanation of how to interpret the symbols used in the capsule descriptions of the more than 1,000 butterflies. Sidebars scattered throughout the introductory text provide quick looks at aspects of the butterfly world. The chapter "Superlatives" is full of butterfly trivia. For example, Queen Alexandra's Birdwing (*Ornithoptera alexandrae*) is so big (over 11 inches) that the first specimen collected in New Guinea was shot out of a tree. "Butterfly Families" describes the four main families briefly. "Morphology" provides a detailed diagram of a generic butterfly and a separate drawing of the wing mechanism. "Butterfly Life Cycles" and "Migration" provide surveys of those topics, and "Butterfly Watching" gives advice on how to start looking at butterflies. The next four chapters contain photographs of the four families grouped by genus. Each genus has a short description and a color photograph of a representative specimen. For each butterfly, there is a descriptive paragraph and a key noting family, geographic zone, size, and an icon indicating threatened/nonthreatened status. If specimens are female, the appropriate gender symbol is given. A symbol notes those species that are more colorful ventrally than dorsally. The photographs, made from specimens at the Allyn Museum of Entomology at the Florida Museum of Natural History, are stunning. The color reproduction is clear and accurate. The "candid" photographs in the introductory chapters are also impressive. An index includes both scientific and common names. Tucked away at the end of the book are a brief bibliography and addresses of some entomological and butterfly societies. While it is too large for a field guide and lacks the scholarly apparatus of an academic work, this book merits consideration by both academic and public libraries for the photographs alone, although the text is useful for someone who knows little about butterflies. The price brings it within the range of all but the most limited book budgets.