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Book review by Don Herbison-Evans, 6 October 2019

Caterpillars, moths, and their plants of Southern Australia

by Peter B. McQuillan, Jan A. Forrest, David Keane, & Roger Grund.
Published by Butterfly Conservation South Australia Inc., Adelaide, 2019,
196 pages of text and photos, plus 9 page introduction,
plus also colour illustrations on the covers and flyleaf.

It is wonderful to see the publication again of a book looking not just at the beauty of adult moths, but at their intriguing life histories, food plants, and behaviours. The main value of this book is perhaps to our children whose imagination may be stirred by finding a caterpillar, and wishing to know more about it. But adults find caterpillars too, and they too may be frustrated by the concentration by Victorian Taxonomists on the adult forms, and be curious to know more about their find. This is the book for them too.

This compact (165x240 mm.) but lavish paperback includes

- 175 colour photographs of Australian Caterpillars,
- 314 colour habitus photographs of Australian moths,
- 96 colour photographs of their various food plants,
- 51 tinted Australian Caterpillar drawings, each exemplifying one the families and subfamilies,
- 9 photographs of prominent entomologists,
- 5 colour photographs of the authors,

and many additional colour photographs of eggs, larval shelters, pupae, and cocoons.

The Preface includes

- * a foreword by the late David Keane,
- * four pages of acknowledgements, with attributions to 106 photographers and organisations,
- * an introduction to Lepidoptera and previous relevant publications,
- * a guide to the layout of the book,
- * five general pages about the importance, life history, structure, food plants, survival strategies, seasonality, collection, and conservation of moths,
- * a history of "Moths and People" in South Australia,
- * and more about food plants.

The main part of the book is 139 pages classified into sections, each covering one of 47 families and subfamilies, presented in the normal order of developmental sophistication: starting with Hepialidae, and ending with Agaristinae. Each page typically has one larger colour photo (~95x50 mm.) and several smaller colour photos (45x30 mm.), and is devoted to one common primary species, with mentions and often photographs of related species.

The book ends with lists separately for

- * further reading,

- * a glossary of entomological terms,
- * an index of caterpillar food plants,
- * an index of moth common names,
- * an index of moth scientific names,
- * a set of biographies of the authors.

The book is clearly the product of the love of its subjects by the authors. Just searching out the photographs and getting permissions for each one from over a hundred photographers boggles the mind.

If Australia's unique entomological heritage is to survive for the joy of future generations, then we must start taking more care of the full ecological web in which these moths are involved. This book is a major step in that direction.

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