

Book Review

A SYNONYMIC LIST OF THE NEARCTIC RHOPALOCERA

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The Lepidopterists' Society, New Haven, Connecticut
i - v, 1 - 145, including index, \$ 4.50

This is the first list of Nearctic butterflies printed since 1938. As such, it is an excellent compendium of names because the meticulous care of the author, no doubt, insures that all names are included. An innovation for a checklist is the placing of the year of publication after a name.

An excellent retention is the list of infrasubspecific names. The reviewer does not believe that such names need or ought to be in Latin, but in view of the fact that most such names in butterflies were proposed as species, or 'varieties', they may be nomenclatorially valid; in addition, there is yet too much uncertainty as to the nomenclatorial position to which many names belong. For example, the name *hagenii*, is listed as a seasonal form under 286b as *Colias eurytheme keewaydin* whereas the reviewer uses this name as a subspecies of *Colias philodice*. The problem is that lists like this do not always represent the latest biological knowledge of the group in question. As used in the present list, the name *hagenii* is not valid, but as used by the reviewer, it is.

Dos Passos has done an excellent nomenclatorial job, but there are serious defects created by limited study of the biology of many groups of Nearctic butterflies. It has been shown that *C. harfordii* (289), *C. occidentalis* (290), *C. alexandra* (293), are subspecies of one species and that *C. barbara* (288) is most probably a seasonal form of one of these. Also, it has been shown that *C. interior* (291) and *C. pelidne* (294) are geographical or altitudinal counterparts of one species (thus, are subspecies). Other obvious problems arise with *Zerene eurydice* (298) and *Z. cesonia* (299), which are subspecies, *Pieris occidentalis* is a species distinct from *P. protodice* (277); *Oeneis ivallda* (662) is a subspecies of *O. chryxus* (665). *Limnitis arthemis* (516), *L. weidemeyerii* (519), *L. lorquini* (520) and probably *L. astyanax* (517) are geographical races of one species; many of the *Papilio*s (248-254) need detailed biological work for many of these are subspecies; *Plebejus icarioides* (458), *P. pardalis* (459), and *P. pheres* (460) are subspecies; *Melitaea gabbii* (574), *M. malcolmi* (575), *M. acastus* (576), *M. palla* (582) and possibly *M. neumogeni* (573) are subspecies; *Melitaea leanira* and *M. alma* are subspecies; the races of *Euphydryas chalcedona* (593), *E. anicia* (594) and *E. editha* (595) are badly mixed up as there are probably only two species here; *G. lygdamas* (479) and *G. xerces* (480) are one species. This list could grow and grow depending on the extent of one's knowledge. The information necessary to have put the names mentioned in a natural order has been published for all the above named, and no doubt for many others. It is unfortunate that the great efforts and the meticulous work of the author did not extend to the biological aspects of taxonomy, for a list of names such as this is intended to indicate phylogenetic relationships and it will be used as such. If it were not to be used in this way, no great catastrophe would be assumed.

Another deficiency in the present work is the failure to include a complete list of Nearctic generic names. This comes about by the expedient of using a recent name in North America (*Speyeria*) for a world wide genus (*Argynnis*) having an older established name. How many other times older names with priority have been omitted can only be conjectured; all our common generic names, *Papilio*, *Pieris*, *Colias*, *Melitaea*, *Vanessa*, *Parnassius*, etc. etc., could be eliminated from North America by the same procedure and will be in the future by "splitters". Names propounded by splitters do not have to be used merely because they have been proposed. Eventually, every species will be placed in a different genus by somebody; this is inevitable. The balance of perspective must not be lost and it is up to biologists in general to demand that we look at the forest, from a distance, not only at the trees.

It is hoped that this list will not be used as an inviolate text; the knowledge of phylogenetic relationships in the butterflies is advancing into a new level of excellence and taxonomic relationships are being brought up to date daily. Unlike the methods used in developing lists of the past, modern scientific methods of experiment and analysis are being used; the relationships shown by names should reflect such knowledge, or their purpose has been thwarted. To the end that dos Passos has produced an excellent and complete list of names, he is to be commended. Now, Lepidopterists owe it to him, and to science in general, to indicate by the study of relationships between populations, the natural arrangement in phylogeny of the insects designated by those names.

The Editor