

*The Life of the Meadow Brown.*

W. H. Dowdeswell, 1981. ca. 14 x 21 cm; 8 + 165 pp., 19 pls., 27 tabs., 29 figs. Heinemann Educational Books, London. Price: £ 5.95, paperback.

In this fascinating little book the author deals with the ecology of *Maniola jurtina*, one of the "most successful" of all European butterfly species. Professor Dowdeswell used this widespread and usually abundant satyrid both as the object of his field investigations and as a convenient research tool to answer some fundamental biological questions, mostly related to ecological genetics. His research programme began shortly after the end of World War II and extended over a period of some 30 years. It was conducted in cooperation with the acknowledged group of Oxford scientists centered around Professor E. B. Ford. The book is concisely written, describing both results and the thought processes directing the research that led from the formulation of the enquiry to its usually successful conclusion. Choice of methodology is discussed in some detail, making the book a very useful reading for less experienced students and amateur lepidopterists. It also clearly shows what can be achieved with relatively simple means. The text of the book is divided into seven chapters and provided with a list of the bibliographical references and comprehensive index. The following aspects of the life of *Maniola jurtina* are among those studied by Dowdeswell (the order follows approximately that used in the book): description of the adults and early stages, life cycle, related species, variation and its significance, population size and its fluctuation, island populations and aspects of isolation, spotting and its significance, 'boundary phenomenon', spot-placing as an index of variation, variation-types and their relationship, geography of variation, sex ratio, evolution of island stabilization, selection, behaviour, selective agents, ecological bacteriology, enzymes and adaptation, electrophoresis, inheritance of spotting, spot-variation. Field work, supplemented by laboratory experiments, took place in Great Britain (including some adjacent islands) and on the Continent, mainly in Holland and Italy.

A few unfortunate errors entered the text. The genus *Maniola* was described by Schrank and not by Linnaeus, as stated on page 6. References are not arranged in alphabetic order and they are cited in the text by numbers instead of the usual and significantly more convenient author's name; some papers are not cited in full and/or correctly (e.g. Atti Accad. naz. Lincei R. instead of incorrect Accademia Nazionale Dei Lincei on p. 159 and elsewhere). The taxonomic account of *Maniola jurtina* is perhaps far too brief, and, to my surprise, the only comprehensive paper on the systematics of the species is not to be found listed in the references: G. Thomson in Tijdschr. Ent. 116(1973): 185-227, 1974. If the reason for the exclusion of Thomson's paper was its abundant use of inconvenient multinomial combinations, denoting not only the superfluous subspecies, but also many individual and local forms, it should have been explained. In any case, it would have been very useful to have provided a comprehensive bibliography instead of the list of only 52 references. Thus the book and especially its readers would have gained much more. The species of the genus *Hyponphele* Muschamp which inhabit Europe should have been included among the British relatives of *Maniola jurtina*, as they are closer to it than many of the related species listed.

The book is well written, inexpensive and, above all, it shows new ways of taking interest in butterflies. Every lepidopterist should read it.