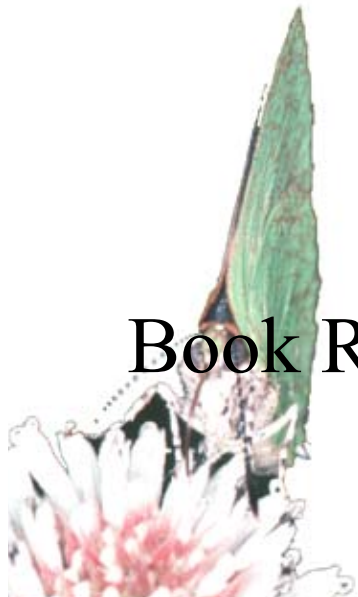


# Book Reviews



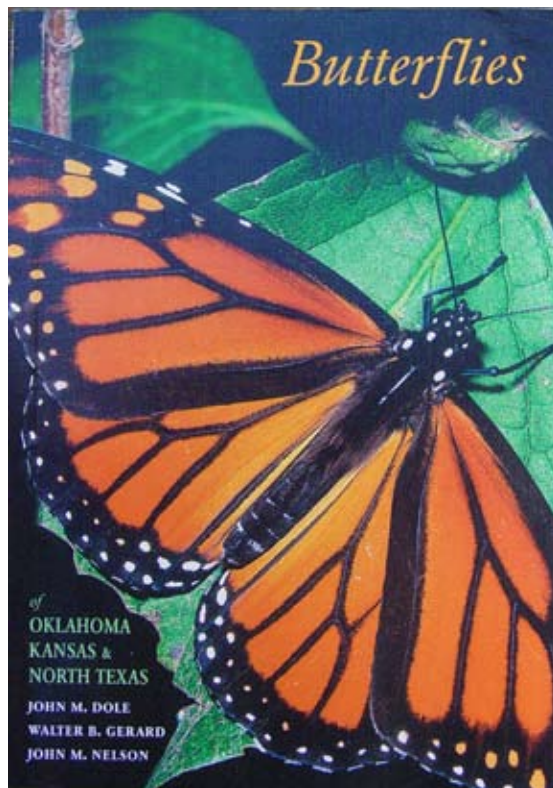
***Butterflies of Oklahoma, Kansas, and North Texas.*** By John Dole, Walter B. Gerard, and John M. Nelson. 2004. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman (ISBN#0-8061-3554-9). Softcover. 5x7 inches. 282pp. \$24.95

Review by Joann Karges

The authors do not claim this to be an all-inclusive field guide even to the region covered — the southern Great Plains. In fact only one hundred species are described in detail, some common throughout the area, others with limited range. For example Swamp Metalmarks are found in one county in northeastern Oklahoma, and Common Mes-tras are acknowledged as occasional strays. Accompanying the excellent photographs are descriptions of each species, their caterpillar foodplants, habitat, those that are similar in appearance, and facts of interest. Range maps pinpoint the counties where the species may be observed.

For the avid beginner, the authors provide general information on butterfly life histories and behavior, on rearing butterflies at home, and advice on identifying, recording, and photographing butterflies. The chapter on butterfly gardening lists native plants for specific butterflies (confined to those described in the picture-text) and native and non-native plants easy to grow and acceptable as nectar plants.

For the more advanced butterflyer, the



principal value of the book may be in locating “target species” or “best places to observe” through the listings of hotspots in the region with rather precise directions to such areas. The appendix includes tables by state which may be of some use, though the “s” for stray may represent only an historic record, such a species perhaps having only once been recorded in many years.

The book is well documented; the bibliography lists mostly popular works, including useful citations to articles in *American Butterflies*, such as the article on the Pontotoc Ridge Preserve (Charles F. Conaway, 1997. Vol. 5, No. 2). The authors recommend the use of more comprehensive field guides for species not described in this book and, accordingly, list them. The index is very complete with common and scientific names for all butterflies and plant species mentioned in the text.

The authors undertook a rather large endeavor in this project and for the most part have succeeded admirably.

## ***Butterflies of the Lower Rio Grande Valley.***

By Roland H. Wauer. 2004. Johnson Books, Boulder, CO (ISBN#1-55566-347-8). Softcover 5x7 3/4 inches. 384pp. \$25

Review by Father Tom Pincelli

Ro Wauer, of many a nature book fame, has struck gold with his most recent release, “Butterflies of the Lower Rio Grande Valley.” This 375 page field guide is extremely user friendly and is the exact right size to slip into a pocket or guide pouch...as long as the pocket is cargo width and depth.

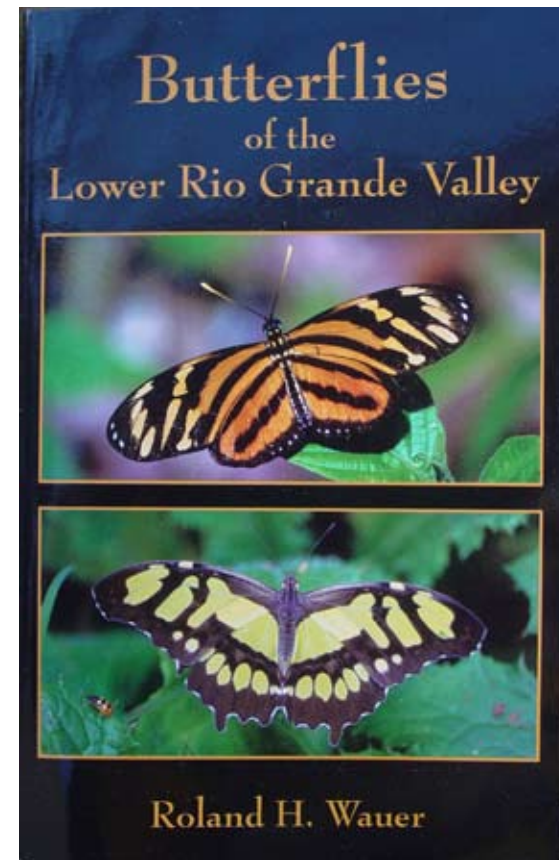
Coverage is almost comprehensive which puts at your fingertips the greater percentage of the butterflies you are likely to encounter while working the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Which brings us to a very important understanding and appreciation of what stewardship is needed for this unique area. Let’s begin with some basic facts.

Approximately (“approximately,” because the list is always growing) 730 species of butterflies have been recorded in the Lower 48, Canada and Alaska. Texas alone has somewhere around 425 on its official list. Now when we come to the Lower Rio Grande Valley, and we are talking about the four county area of Willacy, Cameron, Hidalgo and Starr, the total, as of the publication of this guide, is 282 with a respectable 153 species unlikely to be seen anywhere outside this rather restricted geographical tidbit.

As one friend put it, many birders have “gone over to the dark side.” Myself, I think I’ve gone over to the bright side! When the birding is hot we bird and when it slows to a crawl then we focus earthward and concentrate on those colorful bugs. And that’s where this new guide becomes a major asset.

A number of field guides have preceded this newest addition to my library yet, they all had a much more extensive geographic range. This is the first of its kind to concentrate on such a “small,” so to speak, area. And, without a doubt, when it comes to butterflies our area is the hottest spot in the nation, bar none.

For the most part, the photos used in this book are of adequate size to allow for easy



perusal so as to clearly visualize what the written descriptions are referring to. It is the expert opinion of others much more knowledgeable than I that some 10 or so of the photos need to be corrected...butterflies like birds sometimes confuse us (see list at end of review). This takes little away from the overall quality and value of this regional guide and handbook. Also of value is the list of records for the more esoteric species that make up the Valley’s List. But, it is precisely here that the book is already out of date.

Since its printing in September, 2004, the Rio Grande Valley has been inundated with a plethora of additional records and even some new records such as the common melwhite seen in Mission, Texas. Yet, if nothing more, what this book does give the butterflyer is a historical narrative of the Valley’s extensive butterfly bounty and resource.

All in all, this is one great book with very few drawbacks and one that any naturalist would find most helpful when appreciating the charismatic creatures that make up the world of

butterflies.

Photographs believed to be mislabeled:

“Statira Sulphur” is a green-eyed white (*Leptophobia aripa*); “Goodson’s Greenstreak” is a black-edged dreamstreak (*Erora carla*); “Tropical Greenstreak” is a brown-spotted greenstreak (*Cyanophrys longula*); Underside of “Mexican Silverspot” is a juno heliconian (*Dione juno*); “Pronus Longtail” is an interrupted longtail (*Urbanus pronta*); “Esmeralda Longtail” probably is not; “Frosted Flasher” is a Gilbert’s Flasher; “Morning Glory Pellicia” is a Glazed Pellicia; Female “Mottled Bolla” is a female scalloping of indeterminate species; Upperside “Desert Checkered-Skipper” is a Tropical Checkered-Skipper; Upperside “Tropical Least Skipper” is either a Southern or Orange Skipperling.

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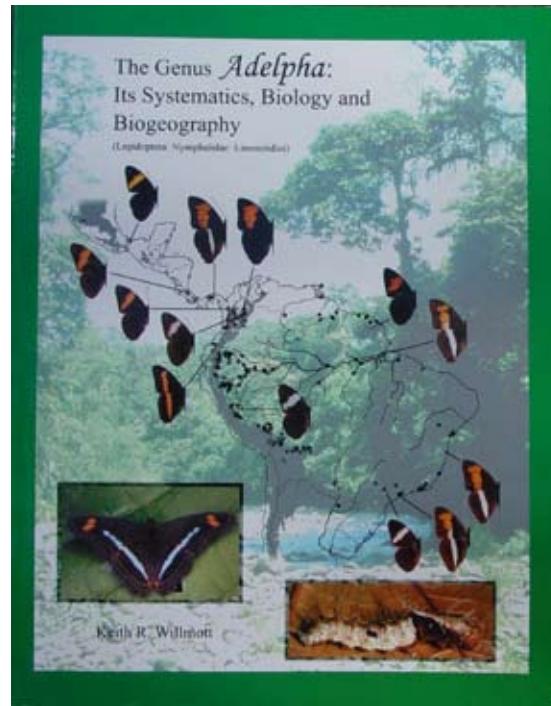
**The Genus *Adelpha*: Its Systematics, Biology and Biogeography.** By Keith R. Willmott.

2003. Scientific Publishers: Gainesville, Florida. (ISBN#0-945417-96-9), paperback, 8½ x 10½ inches. 384pp. \$65.

Review by Jeffrey Glassberg

Although you needn’t leave the United States to spy a sister — California Sisters are resident in the United States (this species also ranges south to Guatemala), while another two species, Band-celled Sister and Spot-celled Sister, are rare strays to the Lower Rio Grande Valley (with Band-celled Sisters probably occasionally breeding there) — you probably don’t need this book if your butterflying is confined to the United States. However, even if you don’t have a sister, if you are a butterflyer who travels to, contemplates traveling to, or dreams of traveling to the Neotropics, this book will be useful for you. Keith Willmott thoroughly treats and illustrates in color (uppersides and undersides) all 209 subspecies of the 85 species of sisters, including, of course, the 32 species found in Mexico.

The sisters have been one of the most taxonomically garbled groups of Neotropical butterflies. Willmott has done a prodigious job of straightening out most of the gnarly nomenclature. His approach to systematics is




straightforward and practical. As he correctly observes, “the definition of species taxa is still an intractable problem for taxonomists, principally because names denoting distinct entities are incompatible with the continuum of genetic differentiation and reproductive isolation between populations that is biological reality.” And, as Willmott recognizes “The criteria used to define species largely depend on which species definition is adopted and the primary goal of the classification.”

Most of the species/subspecies accounts include the following headings: Identification, taxonomy and variation, Range, Habitat and adult ecology, Specimens examined. Because, in most cases, little is known about the habitat and adult ecology, something like 90% of the text is under the “Identification, taxonomy and variation” and “Specimens examined” categories. Much of what is known has been contributed by Willmott himself — in addition to examining specimens at more than 50 major museum and private collections, Willmott spent almost two years in the field (mostly in Ecuador) studying these fascinating animals in their native habitat and provides many previously unpublished observations. For example,

although one often sees sisters concentrated in sunlit areas of tropical forests — along trails and light gaps — Willmott and Jason Hall found that sisters are the most common butterflies captured in canopy traps within primary forest. For those few subspecies where information is available about the caterpillar and/or chrysalis stages, that information is included in an “Immature Stages” category. And, known information about caterpillar foodplant usage is compiled in an appendix.

An appendix provides pictorial keys to the identification of some of the species. These keys are promising and could be made even better. The inclusion of all species would be helpful. The biggest drawback from a butterflyer’s viewpoint is that one needs to have a clear view or (preferably) a photograph of both the upperside and underside of the same individual to use the key.

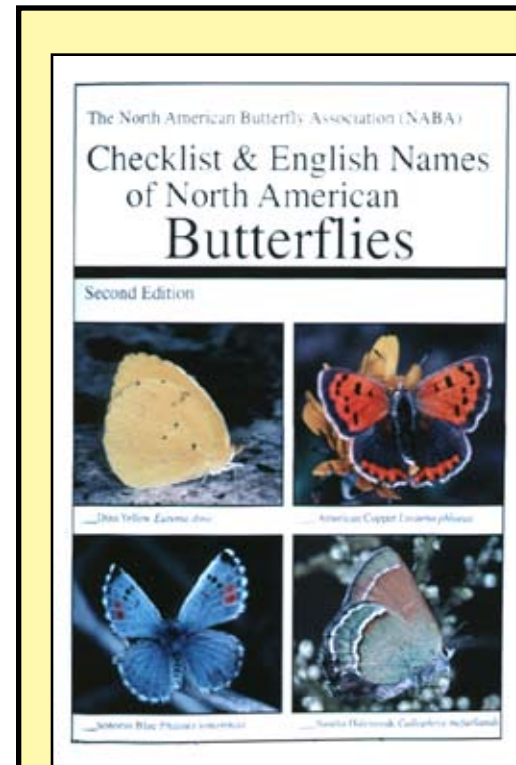
In conclusion, anyone with an interest in Neotropical butterflies would do well to acquire this book. 

## Monarchs (Continued from page 2)

to stop the pointless and constant mowing and spraying of herbicides along millions of miles of roadways and in countless numbers of local, county and state parks?

Some point their fingers at the Mexican people and/or the Mexican government, blaming the logging of the fir forests where the Monarchs spend the winter as the major cause of the decline in the migratory populations. Having visited the overwintering sites on a number of occasions and having seen aerial photographs of the sites over time, I have little doubt that illegal logging is stressing the Monarchs at the overwintering sites. However, I do not believe that it either warranted or productive to “blame” the people of Mexico. Rather, the people and government of the United States should find a way to help the Mexican government create a situation where there are extremely strong financial incentives to conserve the Monarchs.

Jeffrey Glassberg



## NABA Checklist & English

Invaluable to everyone interested in butterflies! All 722 species of butterflies recorded in North America north of Mexico (and in Hawaii) are listed, giving both the English and scientific names. In front of each species’ name is a line for a checkmark. Following each name a space is provided to allow you to write in date and locality information.

Also included is an introductory section, explaining the formation, deliberations, and policies of the NABA Names Committee and a commentary section, in which the reasons why particular names were chosen are explained and the votes of the Committee are given.

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