

---

## BOOK REVIEWS

---

### Catalogue of the Hostplants of the Neotropical Butterflies

G. W. Beccaloni, A. L. Viloría, S. K. Hall and G. S. Robinson  
m3m-Monografías Tercer Milenio, Volume 8. Zaragoza, Spain. 536 p. 2008

This book sets out to compile most of the published food plant records, and many unpublished records, for the butterflies (including skippers) of the Neotropics – and it succeeds. It includes more than 18,000 records of which 3,656 are previously unpublished. These have



been compiled from 884 scientific papers and books in five languages up to the end of 1999, together with personal communications from 79 individuals. There are plausible records of food plants for 1,991 of the 7,783 Neotropical species (26%) and for 614 of the 957 genera (64%). All butterfly and food plant names have been updated in line with current usage – the butterflies based on Lamas (2004).

Trinidad is well represented considering its size and the smallness of its butterfly fauna compared to the

mainland Neotropical countries. There are records from Trinidad of food plants for 287 species (Beccaloni pers. comm. 2008), based on published observations (mainly Barcant 1970) and unpublished records from Margaret E. Fontaine, Scott Alston-Smith, Clive Urich and myself. This represents more than 40% of the butterfly fauna, and is well above the average.

The body of the book is a list of the butterfly species grouped into families and subfamilies with, for each butterfly species, the family and species of food plant, the compilers' assessment as to whether the food plant record is plausible, dubious or erroneous, the country of observation and the source. The source references are given in full in the bibliography.

This is followed by appendices of (1) common names of food plants from the sources examined, (2) synonyms, misspellings and old combinations of names of food plants, (3) a catalogue of the 169 food plant families and species, listing the butterflies associated with each. Indexes to the plants and butterflies complete the work.

In the introduction, the authors discuss some of the problems of such a list, including perpetuating errors, multiple repetitions based on a single observation, records becoming firmer and simplified as they are compiled in later works; the citation of captive rearing food plants as field food plants, etc. The authors attempt to address some of these problems by making their own assessment of the validity of each record (plausible, dubious, erroneous), taking care to evaluate the wording of the original source, and not including recent observations based on previous published work (although these may not always be obvious if sources are not given).

Using unpublished observations carries the risk that some observations are less critically evaluated, and may establish misidentifications of butterflies or their food plants in the literature. Many of the unpublished observations are taken from Janzen & Hallwachs (2009), and here they benefit from the use of their unique reference numbers for each rearing, so that records can be rechecked. With hindsight, I wish I had done the same!

I used this book in preparing the latest section of the skipper butterflies of Trinidad (Cock 2009), and it was useful – not only to track down food plant records, but also to recognize those species where nothing seems to

have been recorded. The case of *Vettijs fantasos* (Stoll) highlighted that there are some omissions – the oldest observations by Sepp (1847) were missing, as was this source in the bibliography. Nevertheless, subsequent repetitions of the information without source (Draudt 1924; Scott 1984) were included. The case of *Eutyche subcordata subcordata* (Herrich-Schäffer) illustrates the risk of using unpublished information, as I have found two errors in my unpublished records. These errors are now in the catalogue (based on the information as I provided it, I hasten to stress), and the corrections now published (Cock 2009) will, unfortunately, be easily overlooked.

Although the compilation stops at the end of last century, I do not think this is so critical inasmuch as internet sources and indexing services make it relatively easy to track down more recent publications, particularly research papers. As I said above, I found the book a very useful source. In the case of Hesperidae in particular, it is com-

plemented by the excellent bibliography of the Hesperioidea by Mielke (2005) which lists whether publications include food plant information, but without giving details. Working with both gives me confidence that I missed very little published information in preparing my latest account of the Trinidad skippers (Cock 2009).

This book can be ordered online at <http://www.seaentomologia.org/> for 18 Euros. All references mentioned here are included in my Part 16 of my series on the skipper butterflies of Trinidad (Cock 2009), elsewhere in this volume, and so are not repeated here.

**Matthew J. W. Cock**

CABI Europe - Switzerland,  
Rue des Grillons 1,  
CH-2800 Delémont, Switzerland.  
*m.cock@cabi.org*