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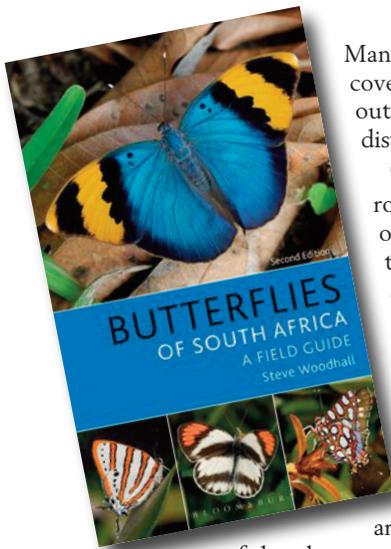
Butterflies of South Africa: A field guide (2nd edition)

Steve Woodhall

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Many field guides make claims regarding the coverage of a particular fauna, but few offer complete coverage, especially when dealing with tropical or sub-tropical regions. Steve Woodhall has pulled out all the stops and produced a guide to all 671 butterfly species found in this region and has distilled this account into a manageable field guide.

The book is slightly larger than the average field guide at 21 x 15 cm, which offers plenty of room for the 10-15 photographs that appear on each of its pages. For each species there are images of both male and female upper wings and another of the underside. The text provides notes on the families, sub-families and genera. Then, for each species it provides the wingspan of both sexes, notes on identification, distribution, habitat, flight period and larval food. The first 40 pages of the guide offer an introduction to butterfly biology and conservation, while the first two pages after the flyleaf offer short-cuts to the families, based on colour. There is an index to common and scientific names, plus another to alternative common names, and the inside front cover also has an index of the common names of the major groups of butterflies.

For anyone with an interest in the butterflies of South Africa, this has to be an essential addition to their library. The images are bright and clear while the text is compact and informative. The sheer number of photographs may be confusing for the beginner, but the arrangement of the book by colour makes the main groups very accessible, and careful comparison of the photographs and the text will quickly reduce the number of possibilities.

This guide will be an indispensable tool for a wide range of naturalists, both amateur and professional, visitor and resident. If you already own the first edition, it could well be worth investing in this new edition just to access the extra two hundred photographs it contains and, even if you never plan to visit South Africa, if you are fascinated by butterflies this book could be hard to resist.

Peter Smithers