

Objectiu Natura – Associació de Fotògrafs de Natura de Catalunya (ed.) 2012.

Mariposas por la vida. Guía visual de las mariposas ibéricas diurnas. – Objectiu Natura, Barcelona, Spain, 255 pp. ISBN 978-84-616-1072-3. Price: 29.95 € plus shipping costs (order information can be obtained at <http://www.mariposasporlda.org>).

Over one hundred, mainly Spanish, photographers have contributed more than 1,000 photos. Like all the other people involved, they have freely created a book that is special in many ways.

With “mariposas por la vida” (“butterflies for life”) a field guide based on photos, or simply a “visual guide”, was published in November 2012, covering all the butterfly species of the Iberian Peninsula and the Balearic Islands. Two hundred and twenty-nine species of the families Papilionidae, Pieridae, Nymphalidae, Lycaenidae, Riodinidae and Hesperidae are included. In general, the book dedicates one page to each species, most of them with three coloured photos, usually showing the upper- and the underside of the animals. All photos were taken in the field, showing living specimens in their natural habitat. The information on each species is completed by illustrations on distribution, flight time, butterfly size and degree of threat (according to IUCN) as well as – sometimes a bit sparse – information on the larval food plants. Five additional pages show pictures by photographers whose photos have not been published on the pages dedicated to the species.

Being a “visual guide”, as the Spanish subtitle says, supplementary texts were deliberately avoided. The taxonomy is up to date, the photos are of very good quality and aesthetically impressive. For that reason alone the purchase of this book, which is moderately priced, can be recommended. Some readers may regret that the butterflies of the Canary Islands are not included, but this is not a book about Spanish but Iberian butterflies.

Yet another aspect makes this book so special: It is dedicated to Gabino Martín Toral, a Spanish nature photographer and butterfly lover, who died much too early as a victim of the insidious disease amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), a debilitating motor neuron disease. All sales revenue of this book will be given to the foundation “Fundación Miquel Valls”, to benefit the care of ALS patients. So “mariposas por la vida” is a tribute to life, too.

TORSTEN VAN DER HEYDEN