

Life Histories of Cascadia Butterflies

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LIFE HISTORIES OF CASCADIA BUTTERFLIES. 2011 by David G. James & David Nunnallee. 447pp. Publisher: Oregon State University Press, Corvallis. Price: US \$35. ISBN 978-0-87071-626-3.

The great American satirist George Carlin (1937-2008) once observed, "The caterpillar does all the work, but the butterfly gets all the publicity." Carlin was decidedly not an entomologist, but his maxim is a nice philosophical summary of the book, *Life histories of Cascadia butterflies*. The work hearkens back to a time when exploring and clearly illustrating the natural history of butterfly early stages, host plants, predators, defenses, diapause, and migration pointed to the future scientific understanding of butterflies and their evolution. William Henry Edwards, Samuel Scudder and colleagues understood caterpillars and dedicated fieldwork, and they all would have been excited by *Life histories of Cascadia butterflies*. The book illuminates what naturalists dream about; the secret lives of insects that abound in nature.

All of the photographic portraits in this field guide are alive with vibrant detail and information, and they demonstrate both the dedicated naturalist's understanding of the subject and the craft of photography. The well-wrought chapters and species accounts are concise models of how to convey

information. There are few, if any, shrill diatribes about species names or political fluff. This book is about butterfly life histories, and it does an admirable job. The text not only informs, it poses questions that point to future directions of discovery and research. What is more, readers of this field guide are encouraged to solve problems by making their own field observations, and getting them published; an excellent example of educational science. True, the coverage is restricted to a small geographic area, but the butterfly species treated in the book occur in a much wider area. Not just another pretty butterfly book—*Life histories of Cascadia butterflies* is a unique contribution to the American butterfly fauna that will likely inspire the next generation of butterfly naturalists.

Congratulations to the authors for making public an exceptionally informative work and providing hopeful evidence that butterfly field guides are undergoing a sea change. There is little I can add except to assert that everyone should own a copy of *Life histories of Cascadia butterflies* and use it to gain a better understanding of butterflies and their place in nature. Get to work.

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