

Butterfly Gardening in Israel and The Middle East

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Source: The Journal of the Lepidopterists' Society, 64(2) : 116

Published By: The Lepidopterists' Society

URL: <https://doi.org/10.18473/lepi.v64i2.a10>

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BOOK REVIEW

Journal of the Lepidopterists' Society
64(2), 2010, p. 116

BUTTERFLY GARDENING IN ISRAEL AND THE MIDDLE EAST. By Dubi Benyamini. 357 pp. Keter Publishing, Jerusalem. 2009. ISBN 978-965-07-1723-0.

This is undoubtedly the most beautiful book on butterfly gardening ever published, furnished with 1372 glorious color photographs of butterflies (and larger, diurnal moths), plants, and gardens, all exquisitely reproduced to the highest world standard. The text and illustrations are by the most distinguished Lepidopterist in Israel (who also happens to be the living world authority on the butterflies of Chile), who is also one of that nation's foremost conservationists and legendary for his skill in laboratory rearing. The text is exceedingly rich in biological information—life cycles, behavior, interactions with plants and predators, vision and the biomechanics of flight—as well as an overview of butterfly conservation. In short, it is an exceptional work that belongs on every Lepidopterist's shelf (or coffee table!).

There's just one problem: it's written entirely in Hebrew. There are scientific-name indices, but working back from them to the body of the book is difficult at best. (Hebrew is written from right to left, so

the whole book seems to be “working back.”) For many Jewish Lepidopterists this may not be a problem (though the living language, with a specialized scientific and gardening vocabulary to boot, may pose a challenge to those who studied only rudimentary and/or Biblical Hebrew as Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation!).

For non-Hebrew readers, a glimpse of this book may even tempt at least a token effort to learn this rather difficult language!

This is the second major Middle Eastern butterfly book in recent years to be linguistically-inaccessible to many American and European Lepidopterists, the other being Vazrik Nazari's (2003) *Butterflies of Iran*, published in Farsi and also copiously illustrated (mostly with specimen photos). One wishes both would become available in translation, and soon. There are no plans at this time to translate Benyamini's book, but an English “Contents” page will be available to purchasers outside Israel. As of this writing there is no U.S. distributor, and inquiries may be made (in English!) to the author at dubi_ben@netvision.net.il.

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