



RÁKOSY L. 2024: A FIELD GUIDE TO THE BUTTERFLIES OF ROMANIA. Pelagic Publishing, London, 376 pp. ISBN 978-1-78427-477-1. Price USD 42.00.

Romania, a country known in the West primarily for Transylvania and the Carpathians, lies at the crossroads of several ecological gradients – between Central and Eastern Europe and at the border of the Balkans. It boasts diverse habitats, ranging from continental cultural landscapes and the high Carpathian Mountains to the Danube Delta, with its coastal sand dunes and Mediterranean shrub vegetation. This rich mosaic of environments supports an equally rich butterfly fauna, placing Romania in 14th–15th place in Europe in terms of butterfly species diversity.

I now have in my hands a guide to the butterflies of Romania – or, more precisely, its English edition, as the Romanian version was published several years ago. Upon opening it, I was struck by the preface written by King Charles III of the United Kingdom. Not every butterfly guide features a foreword by royalty from an entirely different country! This highlights the high regard in which Romanian lepidopterists are held across Europe. They consistently publish in respected entomological journals, including high-impact scientific periodicals. This stands in contrast to the limited support and awareness among the Romanian public. The Entomological Society of Romania, established 30 years ago, consists of only a handful of dedicated individuals striving to elevate local knowledge to Western standards. I believe this lack of local engagement is one reason for publishing an English

edition – when there aren't enough local experts conducting butterfly inventories and monitoring, the support of the international lepidopterist community becomes invaluable.

The book follows a standard structure, covering butterfly biology, life cycles, and monitoring methods before introducing Romania's geography. The core of the book is an atlas detailing every Romanian butterfly species. As a researcher, I particularly appreciate the sections on butterfly protection, conservation, and the legal aspects of studying Romanian Lepidoptera.

The book's quality is excellent, with detailed species accounts, including photos of butterflies in nature as well as images of different life stages. Identification is further aided by plates featuring mounted specimens with arrows pointing to key diagnostic characters. For difficult species, illustrations of male genitalia are also provided. Lastly, taxonomic notes on the butterfly subspecies found in Romania add further value.

Of course, no work of this scope is without minor errors. For example, *Pyrgus malvae* is mistakenly depicted instead of *Spialia orbifer*, and *Brintesia circe* appears where *Hipparchia syriaca* should be in the Species accounts. However, further in Plates the pictures are correct.

Overall, I highly recommend this book to any butterfly enthusiast travelling to Romania or neighbouring countries, as well as to researchers planning fieldwork in the region.

Z. Faltýnek Fric
*Institute of Entomology, Czech Academy of Sciences
České Budějovice*