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**A checklist of the butterflies of Melanesia, Micronesia, Polynesia
and some adjacent areas**

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“To any meditative Magian rover, this serene Pacific, once beheld, must ever after be the sea of his adoption. It rolls the mid-most waters of the world, the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic being but its arms. The same waves wash the moles of the new-built Californian towns, but yesterday planted by the recentest race of men, and lave the faded but still gorgeous skirts of Asiatic lands, older than Abraham; while all between float milky-ways of coral isles, and low-lying, endless, unknown archipelagos, and impenetrable Japans. Thus this mysterious, divine Pacific zones the worlds whole bulk about; makes all coasts one bay to it; seems the tide-beating heart of the earth.”

Herman Melville, 1851
Moby Dick (p. 456)

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ABSTRACT

A systematic checklist of the butterflies of Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia is presented. A significant number of previously unpublished island records were found in major museum collections in the UK, Australia and the USA. Aspects of butterfly distribution, authorship of names, and taxonomy are addressed, and sources for about 2,200 published butterfly names are incorporated in a comprehensive bibliography of Pacific butterflies. Combined with recent publications dealing with specific areas, such as Papua New Guinea, a working systematic checklist of Pacific Region butterflies is available for the first time.

INTRODUCTION

More than double the size of either the Atlantic or Indian Oceans, the Pacific Ocean is the largest area of water on the globe, with tens of thousands of islands, islets and atolls scattered across more than 165 million square kilometres of ocean, from the subarctic Aleutian island chain in the North Pacific, to the Southern Ocean. It spans more than 200 degrees of longitude, from the Chile basin at *ca* 80° West, to the Kamchatka Peninsula, Japan and the Philippines at *ca* 125° East. Understandably, in view of this geographical spread, the islands of the Pacific do not constitute a natural biogeographical unit, although the fauna is largely Papuan in origin (Mayr, 1941).

A basic lack of field data has hampered interpretation of Pacific butterfly biogeography. For example, Adler & Dudley (1994), assessing butterfly distribution across the Pacific, reported 121 species from the Solomons Archipelago (including Bougainville, which belongs politically to Papua New Guinea), 26 from the Santa Cruz group, and 57 (including several requiring confirmation) from Vanuatu. As a result of new information obtained over the last decade, 196 species are now known from the Solomons Archipelago (*excluding* Bougainville) (Tennent, 2002d), 52 from the Santa Cruz group (Tennent, 2002c, 2002d), and 69 (*excluding* those requiring confirmation) from Vanuatu (Tennent, 2004e). Recent fieldwork has resulted in the known distribution of several lycaenid butterfly genera (*e.g.* *Everes*, *Theclinesthes*, *Hypochrysops*) being extended eastwards by many hundreds of kilometres. The purpose of this paper is to present historical and newly acquired data in one source.

Geographic Coverage

This checklist documents the butterfly fauna of those parts of the Pacific region that have been largely ignored or overlooked (Figs. 1, 2). In the eastern Pacific the situation is straightforward: the Galápagos (Ecuador) are excluded because the few butterflies that occur there are of Neotropical origin and are well documented (Williams, 1911; Roque-