

## **Book review: Satpada Our World of Insects**

An admission upfront-I am not a scientist, nor an entomologist, so what am I doing reviewing a book on insects! The authors, Rebecca Thomas and Geetha Iyer have taught biology at Rishi Valley School, and this book is an output of their passion for nature. Just like the authors, I am an amateur naturalist, whose interest in nature began as a young child, more than two decades ago and blossomed through observations in the field. As a young boy interested in creepy-crawlies, I would have given an arm and a leg to lay my hands on a easy-to-use guide about the insects in my area! None existed and I was left to my own devices. Two decades on, and unfortunately, the situation has not changed! Books on nature for the inquisitive student or the amateur naturalist just do not exist in India. And if they do exist, they might not be relevant to the area that you live in. It is essential for the books to cover local areas, so that people can observe insects in the field and then come back to consult the books for more information.

When I got hold of a copy of Satpada Our World of Insects, it was an "Aha!" moment. I wished I had access to books of this kind when I was younger. The charm of Satpada Our World of Insects is that its is written simply, with the minimum of fuss and not too many scientific names and technical jargon. I love the book's name, too. The word Satpada (meaning six-legged in Sanskrit; all insects have three pairs of legs) has nice ring to it! Colour, black and white plates and sketches embellish the book and break the monotony of plain text. There is just enough information to pique the curiosity of even a casual reader. The section on insects in our culture is fascinating. Stories such the firefly stealing the dragonfly's lantern, and hence having the ability to glow at night were enchanting.

Though the sections on taxonomy and insect descriptions do have some scientific terms, these are kept to a minimum, so as not to intimidate the reader. The description of select insects is especially useful for those who spot a bug and want to find out a little more about it. For those who want to go beyond flipping through the book, and into the field, there are loads of interesting tips on how to observe insects in the field.

As always, there is scope for improvement. The quality of some of the pictures could be better, a few punctuation and spelling errors have crept in as well, and should be weeded out if a next edition happens (and I hope it does!).

The world of nature beckons. If you are not already concerned about our country's depleting bio-diversity, its time to begin now. Buy this book, gift it to your kids and then accompany them into the field. Open their eyes (and yours) to the wonderful world of nature. Its a great way to start the the new year!

Book Title: Satpada Our World of Insects

Authors: Rebecca Thomas and Geetha Iyer

Published by: Rishi Valley Education Centre (KFI), Rishi Valley 517352, Andhra Pradesh

Contact: [office@rishivalley.org](mailto:office@rishivalley.org)

Book reviewed by: Sanjay Sondhi, TITLI TRUST

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