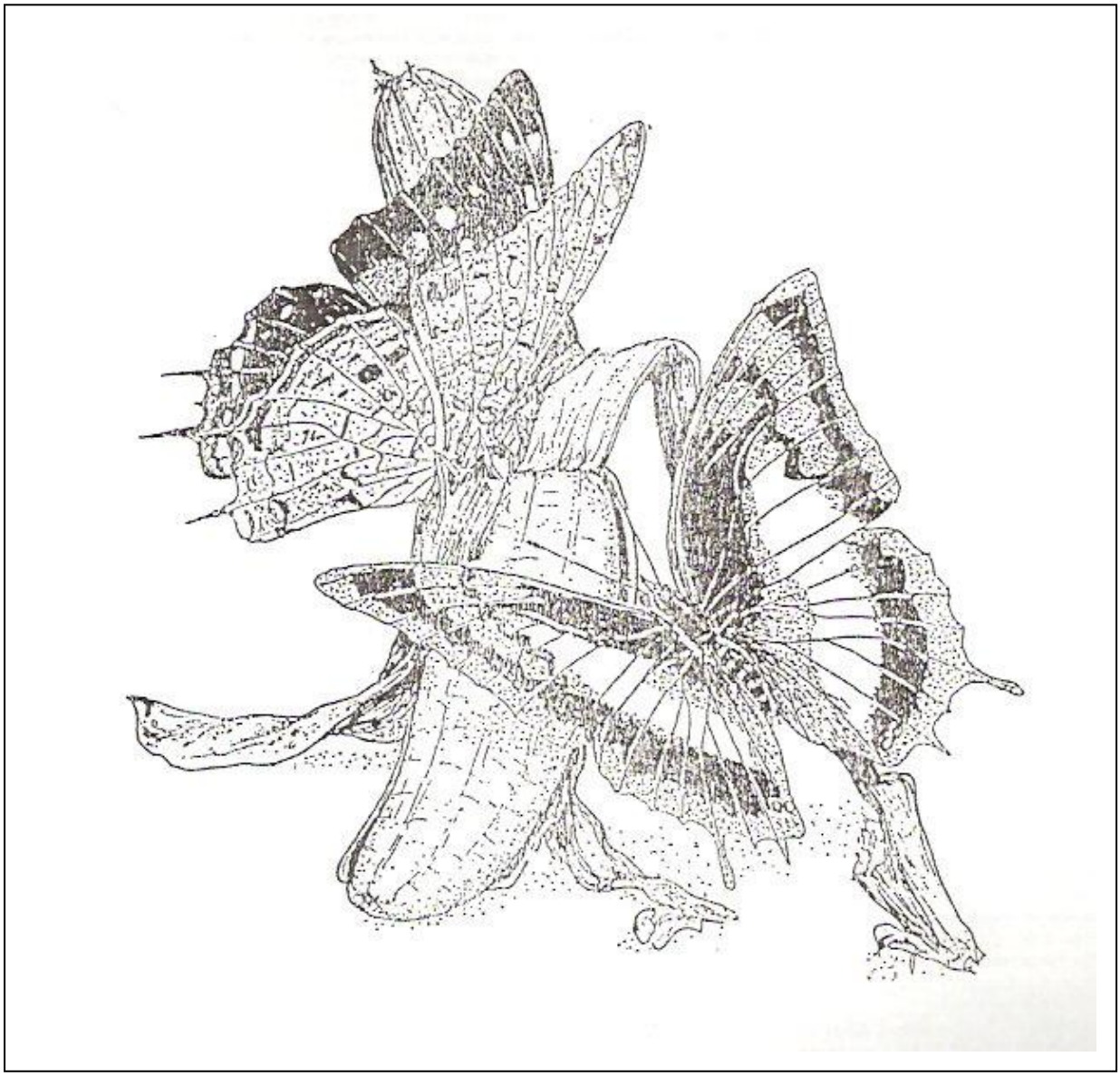
LEPIDOPTERISTS' SOCIETY
OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

METAMORPHOSIS No. 23

Editor: N.K. Owen-Johnston



Editorial

I recently had a most disturbing experience. In the course of a business discussion with a client, the subject of butterflies arose. He informed me that as a schoolboy and as a young man prior to his marriage, he had spent every available holiday collecting butterflies in Rhodesia and Mozambique. His speciality was *Charaxes* and he had compiled an extensive collection of butterflies showing the variation in the various populations in different forests. As many of these forests no longer exist, you can imagine my excitement at the prospect of seeing such a collection. In response to my reaction he offered to show me the collection and said I was welcome to any specimens I could use. An appointment was made for the following weekend. Imagine our shock when the collection turned out to be thousands of rusty pins and dust.

This experience brought home to me the necessity of providing adequate care and housing for our collections. We all take pride in our collections and if we consider the cost, in terms of money, time and sweat, of amassing a reasonable collection, none of us would like to think that all we are ultimately doing is feeding a few museum bugs. How many of us have made adequate provision for the disposal of our collections after death? The simple addition of a clause to your will will ensure that the collection goes to someone or some institution that will take good care of it in the future. Please don't ignore this plea. Make adequate arrangements for the disposal of your collection now. The sight of a once proud collection of butterflies being reduced to rusty pins and dust is not a pleasant one. Avoid having this happen to your collection.

Regional roundup

Transvaal – We have just experienced one of the wettest and coldest summers ever. As a result of this there has been virtually no fieldwork done in the Transvaal this season.

Natal – Cold and wet conditions continue to prevail. There were a few exploratory trips into Natal but no butterflies of note were recorded.

Cape Province – The following report is submitted by Steve Woodhall.

"We arrived in PE on a beautiful Saturday morning – unfortunately the aforementioned weather caught us on the way to Witteklip Mountain, so we went to Coega instead. At Coega, despite a howling gale, we saw quite a few species – *Aloeides clarki*, *A. pierus*, *Iolaus mimosae* and *Gonatomyrina lara* being most in evidence.

The rest of our one-week stay in PE proved to be one long battle to dodge the elements. PE itself remained unremittingly dull and cloudy, so we concentrated on driving inland.

At Queenstown we beat the weather for a morning and on Nov. 23 we had quite a successful day on Long Hill. We were disappointed to find no *Poecilmitis braueri*. However, we did find a few specimens of *Lepidochrysops grahami* – most of which were worn. I missed my first ever *L. asteris* (much cursing). *Orachrysops major* was present – one female was taken. *Aloeides braueri* was out in large numbers as was *Phasis braueri*. The latter was very fond of large flowering bushes on top of the hill. Some really horrid weather coming from the north drove us back to PE where we found more of the same! The next day we drove into the Karoo near Jansenville on the road to Somerset East. Acting on information received we found a gully with male *Poecilmitis beulah* defending territories on the lip of the gully. The same gully produced a couple of male *Trimenia macmasteri* as well as a few *Poecilmitis chrysoar*. The hilltop above the gully produced *Stugeta bowkeri bowkeri, Anthene butleri livida* (dozens) and *Charaxes jahlusa jahlusa*. Each bush on the hillside was frequented by several *Anthene definita* and *Ioalaus mimosae*, which was obviously enjoying a good season this year.

The next day (25 Nov.) saw us once again fleeing coastal cloud into the Karoo, this time towards Cookhouse. Having no real spot to aim for we just drove until the cloud ended, and chose the first likely looking low koppie.

This particular koppie (about 20 km south of Cookhouse on the road from PE) proved to be a goldmine. First inspection turned up the usual common Karoo stuff – *C. jahlusa, I. mimosae, A. butleri livida* etc. Things started to get interesting when a low rocky ridge produced two very well marked male *Durbania* (these are still awaiting identification). Of course an intensive search began … and a tiny little brown thing flew out of a clump of grass … *Lepidochrysops bacchus*, a freshly hatched male!!! A REALLY intense search then began, when – you guessed it – the sun went behind clouds.

Well, we've all done it, haven't we? For the next hour I sat like a lump of rock on that ridge, willing a distant hole in the clouds to interpose itself between me and the sun. From time to time fruitless searches of the underside of rocks were made to find an astonishing lack of *Campontous* ants. I had just about given up when out popped the sun and just as suddenly a perfect pair of *L. bacchus*, seemingly out of nowhere.

Another hour of searching proved fruitless so I set off back to the car. However, another surprise awaited me. Out of a clump of grass my foot flushed a small silvery blue thing – a freshly emerged female *Anthene millari* hundreds of km south of its usual haunts. I found another female and male circling nearby bushes in company with *A. butleri livida* and *A. definita*. Am I right in thinking this the first Cape record for this species? The interesting question to answer is – how wide IS *A. millari's* distribution in the Eastern Cape. As well as *L. bacchus*. A nice project for local lepidopterists.

The sun was shining fitfully in PE the next day (although Witteklip had its usual cloud cover) so we visited Skoenmakerskop to find *Poecilmitis thysbe* flying in small numbers.

The next day we decided to head west after hearing of Berg winds in Knysna. Driving up Langkloof, sure enough at Joubertina the cloud suddenly cleared – a brilliant sunny day. Jayne dropped me at the start of the path to Kamanassie. 25 km of walking and 1000 m of climbing later I returned footsore and weary, but elated. This fascinating mountain had shown me her secrets – *Lepidochrysops robertsoni* and *balli, Dingana bowkeri (bella*?), *Thestor montanus, Aloeides pallida jonathanae* and *A. quickelbergei* were all seen among the foothills. But the real thrill was at the peak after a climb of Alpine proportions – *Poecilmitis balli* whirling around the precipitous crags against a backdrop of distant hills and sea.

The next day dawned bright and sunny so I dragged my weary limbs out of the Leisure Isle Motel's comfy bed and we headed for Avontuur and rumours of *Lepidochrysops braueri*. As soon as I reached the hilltop to find *L. robertsoni, A. quickelbergei* and legions of *Capys alphaeus,* a wickedly cold southeaster blew up – causing instant disappearance of all Lepidoptera except a couple of hardy *Durbaniella clarki*. I DID see a blue *Lepidochrysops* being blown away from me at 60 kph – perhaps it was *braueri*. Our old friend the weather had caught us up with a vengeance and Knysna was a cold wet place on the next day. We decided to head for Cape Town (it being no comfort to hear of heat wave conditions in PE that day!).

In Cape Town there were no clouds but a very strong southeaster. A trip inland to Brandvlei produced 35 degrees C heat and good exercise trying to follow *Poecilmitis brooksi* without sustaining a broken neck! The large hesperiid *Tsitana tulbagha tulbagha* was also flying in small numbers. My last day's lepidopterising was enjoyed in the company of J.C. McMaster who very kindly showed me the secrets of Gydo Mountain. We climbed the long spur on the northwestern end of Gydo and found only a few *Poecilmitis adonis* – obviously the beginning of the brood. *P. uranus* on the other hand was quite common – every rocky spire had one or two circling it. The big thrill about halfway up the mountain was the sighting of *Lepidochrysops quickelbergei*. This insect is as conspicuously silvery-blue as *L. glauca* as it flies to and fro halfway up sheer cliffs and pinnacles. Very occasionally one flies down to visit a flower – but they are so net-shy that even Rob Paré's famous tree stump would startle them. I finally caught one with a flukey sweep of my net – but I saw ten times as many as I caught.

The higher slopes of Gydo harboured truly vast numbers of *Thestor petra*. This was a special thrill for me as I had never seen any *Thestor* in numbers before. They were everywhere – sitting on dead twigs, rocks and dry grass and constantly 'dog fighting' one another low down in the 'lanes' between the rocks and vegetation. I estimate that we saw about 200 as we climbed to the top – the total number on the wing must have been thousands.

We found the summit inhabited by the usual Cape mountain population of *Lepidochrysops*. *L. variabilis* was quite common and we took a few of the beautiful large *L. oreas* – type species which flies there. A single specimen of *Pseudonympha trimenii* also put in an appearance.

All in all we had a successful trip, we mused, as we drove home to Joeys through constant rain. Much thanks are due to Paul Liversedge and Cameron MacMaster for their help and advice with "spots". We were extremely glad, however, that we were able to extend our knowledge of Cape Lepidoptera to a small extent with those discoveries at Cookhouse … It was nice as a "Vaalie" to find something new in our Cape members' backyard!"

Zimbabwe – The only report to come in for this region is that of a trip to Mt Selinda by Mr. I. Bampton and Mr. Ian Mullin. They report that the forest was very quiet, with very few butterflies on the wing. There was a small hatch of *Mimacraea neokoton* and a few specimens were recorded.

Malawi – I had the good fortune to visit Malawi in the company of Ivan Bampton, for the last two weeks of March and the first week of April. The following report is a brief account of our trip. Our first call was the Nyika Plateau. We spent a total of five days there and experienced cold weather with mist and rain every day. However, on the odd occasion that the sun shone, the wealth of butterfly fauna was quite incredible. Our first stop was the Chowo Forest in Zambia. This is part of the Nyika Plateau and the road, which is unfenced, is the border between Zambia and Malawi. The principal site here is a large rock which overlooks part of the forest. This is a unique spot as it enables one to observe the butterfly fauna in the canopy at close range. The highlight was the sight of *Iolaus helenae* flying about within five meters of us. *I. helenae* is a newly discovered species. It was first recorded by Mr. I. Bampton a few years ago and is only known from this locality. The description is complete but remains unpublished.

The other great highlight was observing *Charaxes dowsetti* (Henning, 1989). This is a large red *Charaxes* in the *druceanus*-group. It flies in the high montane riverine forest above 2 200 meters. This is the most unlikely looking habitat imaginable. The males are big and fly in typical charaxes style, defending their territories against all comers. The females are even larger and fly rapidly from bush to bush, settling often for long periods of time. The light coloured bar in the females' wing is very prominent in flight. Two as yet undescribed species of *Alaena* were recorded.

The butterfly fauna of the Nyika is obviously accustomed to the rain and mist of the area. It is an unforgettable experience to stand in the mist waiting for the mist to clear. A sudden puff of wind and the sun appears. Within a minute butterflies are everywhere. *Issoria smaragdifera* fly rapidly along the forest edges. *Harpendyreus* of various species, skippers and even a *Mylothris* or two are all out and about. The wealth of insect life is incredible. Then comes another puff of wind. The mist rolls in again and all is still.

From the Nyika we moved our base to Mzuzu. From there we went on day trips to various localities. The weather was wet and cold and very few butterflies were around. Undoubtedly, the highlight of this phase of our trip was recording *Pentila carcassoni* at Nkhata Bay. It is an extremely scarce insect – as far as can be ascertained, less than twenty specimens have been recorded – which spends most of its time in the forest canopy. On rare occasions late in the day it descends to forest clearings where it flutters weakly about, frequently settling on dead twigs. It is unmistakable, showing a dark brown, almost black colour in flight. The orange of the upperside is almost covered by the very broad black borders. The underside is a dark brown with gold overtones and black spots and speckles. There is a small patch of dark orange at the base of the forewing underside which is completely obscured by the

hindwing when the insect is at rest. When one considers the sedentary habits of *P. carcassoni* and the poor light conditions in which it comes within range of an observer, it is small wonder that so few have been seen. So far it is only known from the forests in the Nkhata Bay area.

From Mzuzu in the north we moved to Zomba in the south. Here we had three days of good weather before the rain caught us. The first two days were spent divided between the plateau – the flat top of the mountain – and the town itself. The plateau is an area of great potential. However, poor weather meant that there were very few butterflies around. The most spectacular were the blue swallowtails, *Papilio bromius* and the large black and yellow swallowtails, *Papillio pelodurus*. Both were out in fair numbers, flying along the banks of the rivers.

In the town the great interest was *Mimacraea costleyi*. These were found flying around large tree trunks in the botanical gardens and the golf course. They are normally observed late in the day and spend much of their time sitting on the tree trunks where the cryptic colouring of the undersides makes them difficult to spot. They tend to fly high, frequently being seen as high as thirty foot. The males establish territories which they defend against other males, returning to the original trees as soon as the intruder has been chased away. The females fly around without set pattern, frequently settling on the trees. The incidence of observing females to males is about eight males to one female. Another interesting observation in the tour was the occurrence of large numbers of *Baliochila*. These interesting little butterflies are found everywhere, fluttering around and settling on grass stems. They are very fond of damp areas.

We managed one trip to the crater at Mount Mlanje. Once again the poor weather meant a general lack of butterflies. We did succeed in observing a couple of *Acrea pentapolis epidica*. The normal flight is high above the forest canopy, but occasionally they come down to more observable heights. The flight is a slow gliding action interspersed with laboured flapping.

Malawi is an extremely rich hunting ground for the lepidopterist. Despite very wet and unseasonably cold weather a large number of butterflies were seen and recorded, including some of the scarcest butterflies in Africa.

Endymion sleeps again

Alan Heath

It was mid-January and in view of the lovely weather, together with a visit by Steve Collins and Ivan Bampton, I decided we should visit the home of *Poecilmitis endymion* and a few other local Cape species.

It is probably fairly well distributed on the peaks of the Hottentots Holland mountains, but many if not most of these peaks, are inaccessible; at least they are to normal mortals like me. Even for those peaks which are climbable without grappling hooks etc., the odd cloud often seems to choose your particular peak to make its home.

Anyway, it was a perfect day with no cloud or wind, so we three trekked up one of these peaks and after a couple of hours we reached the top. Lo and behold the odd *endymion* was to be seen flying about the highest parts. Easily spotted, they are larger than most of their congeners, the males tending to choose the small rocky outcrops as their territories. The females tended to prefer quite different parts of the area to go about their business.

My motive for going up was to check out my theory about its food plant; I confided in Ivan on this matter and true to form he was able to confirm my theory with his observations. A female was taken for breeding purposes and we (Ivan and I) sat down to admire the view whilst Steve roamed around collecting.

We were watching a small bonfire down in the Franschhoek Valley and as we watched, it seemed to get out of control a bit; it was a long way (say 4 or 5 km away) from my parked vehicle, but I decided that we should all go down, just in case it spread.

As Ivan and I got lower we realized it was really moving fast towards my 4 x 4 bakkie. When I got to the bottom I couldn't see my vehicle at all!!! I ran through thick smoke past some fire fighters and found my vehicle had been badly scorched (plastic bits all melted), it didn't do my tyres any good either, I discovered later – but the fire had moved on, fortunately. I suspect that the ground clearance of the vehicle, together with the fairly flattened parking spot, had helped to save the vehicle from destruction. I believe that the fire beaters also helped to prevent disaster.

It was horrible there with all black burnt stuff all around and a few smouldering logs. The day had been calm but the fire had induced a very strong wind which blew hot smoke past me so that my eyes watered and I could hardly breathe.

Whilst moping about my vehicle, Steve appeared through the thick smoke and informed me that Ivan had refused to venture into the smoke. So Ivan was stranded in the unburnt veldt with the fire gradually edging towards him!! I decided to get the vehicle to the main tarred road where all the action was with all the fire engines and forestry workers etc.

On the way Steve asked a forestry guy to help locate Ivan because we feared for his safety and couldn't see anything through all the smoke. Steve accompanied the ranger in his vehicle and they both went off back through the smoke and the flames to search for Ivan; they made for a forestry hut but they couldn't find Ivan anywhere.

The forestry guy had a radio and eventually called for a helicopter from Cape Town to assist in searching for Ivan. The fire was now moving steadily up the mountain; it was very worrying, not knowing Ivan's whereabouts.

Meanwhile, I was parked near the main road when the fire suddenly turned a bit and started racing through the pine trees; 60,ft high flames can be VERY frightening when they move towards you!! Amid great confusion all the fire fighters and fire engines started to move off fast but I could not see which way to go in all the smoke. The flames were leaping across the road from the trees almost above me.

I started the engine and peered into all the smoke and flames but didn't know which way to go so I eventually decided to head back to where I had been when I found the vehicle. I had to drive fast because there were flames all round and along the gravel road. Fortunately, I was soon through but I was puzzled by a repeating high pitched whistle from somewhere.

I was back in all the horrible black smoke again with all its discomfort but at least I was safely away from the active fire; I soon found the forest ranger who had been with Steve and whilst he stopped to talk to me a message came over the radio that Ivan had made his way to the main road. Yes, it was Ivan who had whistled to me but he was too exhausted to shout or run after me. I found him sitting on what remained of the wide edge of the road – safe but really tired.

We eventually all got back together but due to the fires lower down, it was a while before we could drive off. When we could, we did, because we'd had enough of the heat and the smoke. As we drove away we could see the fire going up the 'kop' where a couple of hours before we had stopped collecting butterflies to watch a little bonfire down there in Franschhoek!!

As so many collectors do on collecting trips, I often park my vehicle, well hidden in amongst the thickest vegetation so as not to draw attention to myself. I have often wondered to myself "what if there were a bush fire?"- well now I know what it can do and how very fast it can travel, quite honestly – it scares the pants off me!!

In my opinion there was little chance of survival for that little population of *endymion* at the top; I shall visit again next year and subsequent years just to monitor the eventual return of that insect. Meantime I fear that *endymion* sleeps!! Fortunately, I now have quite a number of 3rd instar larvae munching away.

On the disappearance of *Zophopetes dysmephila dysmephila* (Trimen), a skipper recently introduced into the extreme Western Cape

A.J.M. Claassens

In *Metamorphosis* **1**(9), 1984, I described the discovery of *Zophopetes dysmephila dysmephila* in the extreme Western Cape. The presence of this skipper in this area was first noticed in September, 1980. The butterfly subsequently was found to be on the increase and from 1984 until 1986 the larvae and pupae were found on nearly every palm tree in the area. From early 1987 the butterfly was noticed to become scarcer and at the end of the year larvae and pupae became rare in Cape Town and the Cape Peninsula as a whole. From early 1988 no living signs of the butterfly could be found on the many palm trees scrutinized. Was a climatic factor responsible for the inability of the skipper to survive in the habitat where it once flourished, or were the early stages killed by a disease or by a parasite?

P.S. Mr. A.K. Brinkman recently told Mr. C. Dickson that the early stages of this skipper can still be found on palms in Claremont near Cape Town.

On the paucity of *Acraea horta* (Linnaeus) in the extreme Western Cape during the summer of 1988-1989

A.J.M. Claassens

Acrea horta has always been regarded as an extremely common species in the Western Cape and particularly in the Cape Peninsula. During the summer of 1988-1989, however, the butterfly was rarely seen in the Cape Peninsula and in fact as far east as Plettenberg Bay. During a ten day visit to the Knysna district in February 1989, I saw one specimen in Wilderness, one in Knysna and one at Keurbooms River.

At present i.e. 15th April, 1989, small numbers of larvae are seen again in the butterfly's favourite haunts, where its most favourite food plant, *Kiggelaria africana*, abounds. I am confident that the species will soon re-establish itself as one of the most plentiful butterflies in the Cape Peninsula. In my garden at Sea Point, where the butterfly's larvae used to defoliate a *Kiggelaria* tree during every summer, not one larva could be found this summer until the second half of April, when a small batch of newly emerged larvae was noticed.

The larvae were heavily parasitized during the summer of 1987-1988. The parasite was an unusual one in that it's larvae, which emerged from the host larvae in their third instar, spun a thin, flat mat of silk above themselves prior to spinning a dense, white cocoon (length about 4 mm) in which they pupated.

Many of these protected cocoons were found on walls and other supports near the host-tree. Unfortunately, I neglected to have the parasite identified when I had plenty of opportunity to do so. The ichneumonid parasite described and depicted in *Butterflies of the Table Mountain Range* was not in evidence at all last year, or the year before, and it could not have been responsible for the paucity of the butterfly.

Report on Lepidopterists' Society visit to Lapalala Wilderness 1 to 2 October 1988

S.E. Woodhall

Objectives
To survey the Wilderness with a particular objective of observing the spring-emerging Lycaenidae.

Members present
S.E. Woodhall, M.C. Williams, D. Upshon, A. Upshon, M. Carter, J.Joannou, P. Roos and M. Roos.

Weather
1 October 1988: Clear skies, warm (about 25 degrees C), 5 knot N/W wind.
2 October 1988: Clear skies, hot (about 36 degrees C) at noon, 10 knot N/W wind.

Areas surveyed
i) 1/2 October 1988: Gullies alongside Visgat Road, south of Weltevreden. Broad grassy gullies with *Protea welwitchii, Bequaertiodendron magalismontanum, Combreturm zeyheri and C. molle* (in bloom), *Ochna pulchra* (in bloom). Rocky ridge south of gully, similar vegetation (no Proteas), but more heavily wooded. The blooming trees were attracting many female lycanenids and *Graphium* spp. Male lycaenids – *Iolaus silarus*, *Spindasis natalensis, Virachola dinochares*, were exhibiting territorial behavior around large isolated *B. magalismontanum* specimens, both on top of and below ridge.

A search of the Proteas showed no sign of infestation by *Capys* larvae, either recently or on old flowers. The area was observed for two days, from 10h00 (approximately) to 15h00 on the first day and from 08h30 to 13h00 on the second day.

ii) 1 October 1988: School road, Lapalala. Heavily wooded mature bushveld.

iii) 1 October 1988: Molope Camp, Lapalala. Area between hillside and river. Grassy areas in bushveld, *Acacia nigrescens* much in evidence. The river was full but flowing slowly.

iv) 2 October 1988: Grassland, flat wooded plateau N.E. of School (Alt. 1160 m). Grassland interspersed with stands of *Combretum, Terminalia*.

v) 2 October 1988: Ravine N.E. of Moerdyk. Altitude 1100-1160 m. Deep gully with heavy tree cover and much shade. Dry except for upper reaches where 4 small pools lay next to a natural spring.

Updated checklist
See appended checklist.

Behavioural observations
i) *Colotis vesta* was observed ovipositing on *Boscia albitrunca*.
ii) *Iolaus pallene* was observed exhibiting typical oviposition site-seeking behavior around *Ximenia americana* but no actual oviposition was seen. *X. americana* is closely related to *I. pallene's* food plant *Ximenia caffra* but has never been recorded as a food plant.
iii) Traps baited with fermenting fruit were set in wooded grassland N/E of the School. A trap baited with pineapple attracted over 10 times as many *Charaxes* as one baited with more usual banana. The majority of specimens feeding were *C. jasius saturnus* with the balance being *C. achaemenes*. Both sexes were attracted to the bait.
iv) Four small pools in otherwise dry riverine area (area V) surrounded by damp mud attracting large numbers of lycaenids (blues), *Graphium* spp., pierids and a few *Charaxes*.
v) *Graphium antheus* was very abundant, *G. morania* less so but still common. Both species were observed ovipositing on *Hexalobus monopetala*. Both sexes were feeding on flowers of *Ochna pulchra*, *Combretum molle* and *C. zeyheri*, and *Ehretia rigida*. Males were patrolling the bush and sucking at damp muddy patches of ground.

vi) *Virachola dinochares* males were exhibiting territorial behaviour around large prominent bushes of *Bequaertiodendron magalismontanum* along a rocky ridge on the south side of the broad valley south of Weltevreden through which the Visgat road runs. Each individual chose a protruding leaf or twig and all butterflies approaching this perch were vigorously pursued. Females flew slowly around the bushes and if spotted by a male, a brief (5 to 10 second) spiralling courtship flight took place over the bush after which the couple sped off at high speed. *Iolaus silarus* males were using the same bushes for territorial behaviour but no females were seen.

vii) Seed pods of *Combretum zeyheri*, when opened, often contained empty pupal cases of *V. dinochares*.

viii) *Stugeta bowkeri tearei* (both sexes) were feeding at flowers of *Ochna pulchra, Combretum* spp., and *E. rigida.*

ix) A few *Iolaus pallene* were seen flying aimlessly around the bush. One male was particularly attracted to *O. pulchra* flowers.

x) A solitary *Danaus chrysippus aegyptius* f. *alcippus* – rare in South Africa – was seen flying along the Visgat road. Sex could not be determined as attempts at capture failed.

xi) *Crudaria leroma* (both sexes) were visiting some low yellow-flowering shrubs where the Visgat road meets the Marken/Doornleegte road, at 09h00.

xi) *Tuxentius calice* and *Zintha hintza* males were exhibiting territorial "dog fighting" around a solitary *B. magalismontanum* standing in a large clearing near Weltevreden.

xii) *Belenois aurota* and *Colotis vesta* (both sexes) were feeding on flowers of a *Maerua caffra* alongside the Doornleegte road.

Visit by D. & A. Upshon on 2 April 1988

The checklist appended to this report includes 30 species recorded by this team in the roadside gully between Reception and Weltevreden.

(* Denotes a new record)

Danaus chrysippus (forms *chrysippus* and *liboria*) (Schreber, 1759)
Physcaeneura panda (Boisduval, 1847)
Acraea neobule neobule (Doubleday, 1848)
Acraea rahira rahira Boisduval, 1833
Acraea eponina eponina (Cramer, 1780)
Acraea caldarena caldarena Hewitson, 1877
Acraea oncaea Hopffer, 1855
Acraea axina Westwood, 1881
Charaxes jasius saturnus Butler, 1865
Charaxes achaemenes achamenes C & R Felder, 1867
Charaxes zoolina zoolina f. *neanthes* (Westwood, 1850)
Charaxes jahlusa rex Henning, 1978
Charaxes phaeus Hewitson, 1877
Hamanumida daedalus (Fabricius, 1775)
Byblia ilithyia ilithyia (Drury, 1773)
Junonia ceryne ceryne (Boisduval, 1847)
Aloeides swanepoeli (Tite & Dickson, 1873)*
Catopsilia florella (Fabricius, 1775)
Eurema brigitta brigitta (Stoll, 1780)
Colotis celimene amina (Hewitson, 1866)*

Colotis vesta mutans (Butler, 1877)
Colotis danae annae (Wallengren, 1857)
Colotis auxo auxo (Lucas, 1852)
Colotis antevippe gavisa (Wallengren, 1857)
Colotis lais (Butler, 1876)*
Colotis evenina evenina (Wallengren, 1857)
Colotis evagore antigone (Boisduval, 1836)
Colotis euippe omphale (Godart, 1819)
Graphium morania (Angas, 1849)

Conclusions

The Upshons' visit of April 2 was interesting in that two *Colotis* species, *C. celimene amina* and *C. lais*, were recorded. *C. celimene amina* is normally only recorded further north in the Great Saltpan area. *C. lais* is an uncommon species from further west, being found chiefly in the northwestern Cape Province and Botswana. Further records of these species are needed from Lapalala to determine whether these specimens were merely stragglers or are actually resident in the Wilderness.

Eleven new species were recorded on this latest visit in October. The spring emerging lycaenids were on the wing and we have now recorded *Virachola dinochares, Spindasis natalensis* and *Anthene definita*, well known Transvaal species. *Iolaus pallene* was much more numerous on this visit, interestingly showing a preference for creamy-coloured flowers such as those of *Ochna pulchra* – is this an instance of protective colouration? A male *Iolaus silarus* was recorded for the first time and this was an interesting specimen in that Dr Williams and I have noted that it shows several differences to *Iolaus silarus* from the N.E. Transvaal. More specimens are needed to throw light on this matter.

A shock was experienced by D. Upshon when his party captured a worn *Charaxes varanes* near Molope. I myself sighted one patrolling the river at Molope. Mr. Upshon has stated that his specimen resembles the Zimbabwean, Botswanan and SWA/Namibian subspecies *Charaxes varanes vologeses* because of its wider white patches – confirmation of this is awaited.

The species list for Lapalala has now reached 125, with 11 new on the latest visit. Clearly the area still has surprises in store.

Acknowledgments

This report is based on the information gathered by the attending members and to them the author offers his thanks.

Especial thanks are also due to the management and staff of Lapalala Wilderness without whose co-operation and assistance this survey could not have been undertaken.

Letter to the Editor

Alf Curle

So far I have not received any further papers or documents relative to the proposed book on localities and butterfly distributions. However, a few of my own observations have been interesting to me, and may well be of interest to other members of the society.

1) *Spindasis victoriae* (Butler). A freshly emerged female was observed in Northern Natal. I was not aware that this insect penetrated the borders of the Republic of South Africa (This identification needs confirmation … Editor).

2) *Aloeides damarensis mashona* Tite & Dickson. A strong colony of this butterfly was found in December 1988 near Waterpoort in the Northern Transvaal. I only expected to find this race north of the Limpopo River.

3) *Aloeides molomo krooni* Tite & Dickson. An extremely strong colony was found by Gary Pillans on a recent visit (early January 1989), to Nkasa Island in the Caprivi. Every effort should be made to proclaim this beautiful area a Wildlife Reserve. The effects of a few Conservation Officers are probably not appreciated, and without the aid of the Tsetse fly to keep men and cattle at bay, the area would have been lost long ago.

4) *Precis antilope* f. *simia* (Feisthamel). The species was common at Katima Malilo in January 1989. I had never come across it in numbers anywhere previously, so was delighted to see it out in force.

5) *Pseudacraea poggei* Dewitz. A male specimen of this butterfly (in good condition) was taken in the Caprivi near Schuckmansberg in January 1989. I had not realized that it came this far south. My last encounter being on the Copperbelt in Zambia where it was common. However, the capture of this specimen suggests that the old records of *Precis touhilimasa* (Vuillot) south of the Zambezi River might just be correct.

Letter to the Editor

Rob Paré

… "Your excellent editorial in *Metamorphosis* **1** (22) deserves further discussion. I fully endorse the view that amateur entomologists should be encouraged to work in all areas of Southern Africa, but I believe we should have a more disciplined approach to our very pleasurable pastime. Every one of us should be able to say truthfully, 'I have managed to discover these facts about the biology' or 'I intend to find out about the biology' of every species we have collected. This will raise us above the plane of filling 'scientific mortuaries' as D'Abrera once called collections. Obviously, specimens must be taken to back up locality records, but there is far more to be discussed about a species than merely what it looks like with a pin through it! David Swanepoel is reputed to have said to a young collector whose ear he was twisting, "Don't ask me, "what was that?" but "What is this?"!

It is very interesting that your editorial was prompted by the capture of *E. achlys* in Zululand. 1988 seems to have been a very good year for *achlys* in Southern Africa. In April it was particularly common in Burma Valley at a spot now known as 'Milly's Corner'. I brought home three females from there in the hopes of breeding from them, Ivan Bampton having mentioned that *achlys* or a close relative used *Craibia brevicaudatus* in Malawi. In spite of being full to bursting with eggs, these three ladies refused to part with a single egg, despite being fed liberal doses of Dr Pare's Jungle Juice, that marvellous elixir of fertility! At the end of September I again visited the corner, but no *achlys* were to be seen. I had to content myself with lurking balefully in the dense riverine in the hopes of finding larvae of interest. I remembered finding some unoccupied hesperiid larval shelters on an as yet unidentified shrub in the undergrowth in April, so set out to find out what it was, without success. In the process, however, I found a parasitized nymphalid pupa with gold patches on the wing-covers, hanging from the tip of a leaf of the same food plant. I was sure it was an *achlys* pupa, but could not be sure that it hadn't crawled from some other plant to pupate there. Bob Drummond of the National Herbarium, Harare, later identified the plant as *Erythroxylum emarginatum*, a very common tree which can grow to 9 metres. In early October, Ivan watched a female *achlys* deposit an egg on the very tip of a leaf of *E. emarginatum*, and the hopes were confirmed! A couple of larvae have since been located, and I hope to give a detailed description of the life history to you in due course. A quick look at the distribution of *E. emarginatum* shows that it is found all the way down the Natal coast, so there's your link! It will be interesting to find out what the hesperiid on the same food plant is.

This all highlights the need for all collectors to discover the food plants and special requirements of all the Southern African species so that those in charge of protection can direct their efforts correctly at the habitats. Given an undisturbed habitat and the correct food plants our butterflies are quite capable of ensuring their own survival – they have been doing that for a long time without help.

If all collectors adopted an approach to their pastime that went beyond the mere amassing of specimens – an approach which sought to add to our knowledge as well as take specimens, the gap between the handful of professionals, who, with some exceptions, choose to remain aloof, and the enthusiastic amateurs. I feel sure that the united front we would then present to the legislators would strengthen our hand in 'collective bargaining' (no pun intended!).

A sobering thought: It is a relatively simple matter for any professional to obtain a collecting permit for a prohibited area, but the same certainly does not apply to amateurs. Let us strive to adopt a reasonable attitude and to be generous with the information we enjoy accumulating, for our own good, and for the future of the creatures we love so deeply".

Letter to the Editor

Kobus de Kock

Reflex immobilization, thanatosis or death feigning in the butterfly *Charaxes xiphares penningtoni*.

"Death feigning" is quite a common behaviour in many insect families and most people must have seen click and snout beetles reacting in this way. However, I was rather surprised recently when some *Charaxes xiphares* females exhibited similar behaviour. Upon extracting any *Charaxes* from trap nets I am careful not to cause any injuries and then examine them to make sure they are not damaged. On two occasions now, discarded *Charaxes xiphares* females simply dropped to the ground like stones, wings perfectly folded over the back, the legs neatly tucked in and the antennae stiffly pointing forward. Only after lengthy coaxing could I get them to fly off again.

Letter to the Editor

J.T. de Kock

On mimicry and other defence mechanisms

I have often wondered about man's interpretation of natural phenomena. Human explanation for God's complicated Creation and his shaping thereof through millennia of evolution. Mimicry and some other forms of survival mechanisms amongst butterflies are particularly subjected to scientific speculation. It remains rather difficult to believe that predation alone could have shaped such a perfect series of mimics as seen in *Princeps dardanus*. The only predators that really have the visual ability to hunt selectively and exert the sort of pressure on a population to shape mimicry, can only be birds. Granted – these evolutionary processes must be all of thousands of years old, probably as far back as the late Jurassic period some 120 million years ago, when birds first appeared. The problem is, we don't see these things happening today. In all my years of collecting butterflies, I have never seen a bird taking a butterfly. I asked several of my birding friends that must have logged up between them thousands of hours of bird watching, and also got a negative answer. Birds just don't seem to be interested anymore. Just think of the massive food source constituted by the millions of

migrating butterflies. Almost annually I watch *Belenois aurota* flying past untouched in their massive migrations. Perhaps birds just learned to avoid all butterflies – full stop.

But that is not the reason for my writing. The lycaenids "false heads" are. One evening, not so long ago, I received a rather unusual call. This chap had collected something he said, with two heads, facing in opposite directions. And what made it even more interesting was that when it opened its wings, the one head split in two! He was convinced that he had an extremely rare previously unrecorded 'something'. Not thinking of butterflies and lycaenids at that time of the night, I was completely bamboozled. And so was he, for it turned out to be a perfect example of *Spindasis natalensis*.

So those "false heads" foxed a human. It may even be capable of foxing a simple lizard or gecko. Which brings me back to my original thought – Man's interpretation of what he sees around him.

Letter to the Editor

J.T. de Kock

Notes on the breeding of *Charaxes druceanus cinadon* from Eshowe, October 1988

I have recently managed to rear two broods of *Charaxes druceanus cinadon* here in Eshowe, Zululand. Eggs were laid on 11/10 and 27/10 respectively and the food plant was *Syzgium cordatum*. Data supplied by Clark (Van Son, 1979) are for end of season eggs and as can be expected these early summer eggs yielded a much shorter life cycle. Surprisingly, however, was the fact that although some of my larvae measured larger than those given by Clark, 33 mm and 54 mm for the 4th and 5th instars compared to 29 mm and 46 mm, the adult butterflies were somewhat smaller than those collected wild. One can thus reason that wild larvae may measure even larger.

Table: *Charaxes druceanus cinadon*: Average duration of larval instars in days.

		1st brood 11.10.89	2nd brood 27.10.89	Clark (van Son, 1979)
	Eggs	10	7	8
	1st instar	8.7	10.6	9
	2nd instar	7.1	7.2	10
	3rd instar	8	7.2	13
	4th instar	9.6	12.3	15
	5th instar	20.2	16	35
	Pupae	15.2	13	20-25
Total duration (larvae only)		53.6	53.3	82

Pennington (1978) mentions that Clark was impressed by the differences which were present in some of the larval instars of *C. druceanus cinadon* and *C. d. moerans*. In some of my larvae, the two normally dark brown dorsal markings were creamy white. No differences were carried through to the adult butterfly.

It is interesting to note from the table above, that although the mean instar length between the two broods sometimes greatly varied, the total duration of larval development was virtually the same. However, more work needs to be done before any conclusions can be drawn.

Finally, I may mention that as with other *Charaxes* I have bred, disease in the final instar took heavy tolls. Overcrowding was not a problem as I kept the individuals in separate containers. Humidity may be a problem as I followed Migdoll's (1987) recommendation not to pierce holes in the containers for air. However, I failed to place absorbent paper on the bottom of the plastic boxes. A rather unpleasant lesson.