

## Genus *Alenia* Evans, 1935 Speckled Sandmen

*In* Carpenter, 1935. *Transactions of the Royal Entomological Society of London* **83**: 409 (313-447).

Type-species: *Pyrgus sandaster* Trimen, by original designation.

The genus *Alenia* belongs to the Family HesperIIDae Latreille, 1809; Subfamily Tagiadinae Burmeister, 1878; Tribe Celaenorrhini Swinhoe, 1912. The other genera of the Tribe Celaenorrhini in the Afrotropical Region are *Celaenorrhinus*, *Scopulifera*, *Bettonula*, *Apallaga*, *Eretis*, *Sarangesa* and *Kobelana*.

*Alenia* (**Speckled Sandmen**) is an Afrotropical genus of two species confined to the Karoo of South Africa.

### \**Alenia namaqua* Vári, 1974# Namaqua Speckled Sandman



Male Namaqua Dancer (*Alenia namaqua*), Farm Witwater, Kamiesberg, Namaqualand.  
Images courtesy Steve Woodhall.

*Alenia namaqua* Vári, 1974. *Annals of the Transvaal Museum* **29**: 13 (9-24).

*Alenia namaqua* Vári, 1974. Dickson & Kroon, 1978.

*Alenia namaqua* Vári, 1974. Pringle *et al.*, 1994: 320.



*Alenia namaqua*. Male. Left – upperside; right – underside.  
Springbok, Northern Cape Province, South Africa. 9 October 1994. J. Greyling.  
Images M.C. Williams ex Greyling Collection.



*Alenia namaqua*. Female. Left – upperside; right – underside.  
Soebatsfontein, Northern Cape Province, South Africa. 6 October 1995. J. Greyling.  
Images M.C. Williams ex Greyling Collection.

**Type locality:** South Africa: “Springbok, 12 km south”. Holotype (male) in the Transvaal Museum, Pretoria.

**Diagnosis:** Distinguished from the closely related *Alenia sandaster*, on the hindwing underside, by the strong white irroration (absent in *sandaster*) (Pringle *et al.*, 1994).

**Distribution:** Namibia – south, South Africa (Western Cape Province – north-west, Northern Cape Province – west).

**Specific localities:**

Namibia – Aus; Tiras Mountains (D. and R. Plowes); Diamond Area (Swart, 2004).

Northern Cape Province – 12 km south of Springbok (TL); Pofadder (Swanepoel, 1953); Soebatsfontein (Swanepoel, 1953); Augrabies (Swanepoel, 1953); Kamieskroon (Swanepoel, 1953).

**Habitat:** Succulent Karoo in Little Namaqualand (Northern Cape Province) and southern Namibia.

**Habits:** Very similar to those of its sister species, *Alenia sandaster* (see below).

**Flight period:** August to December are the main months recorded but it may be on the wing all year (Pringle *et al.*, 1994).

**Early stages:** Nothing published.



Egg of *Alenia namaqua*. Image courtesy Steve Woodhall.

**Larval food:**

*Blepharis* species (Acanthaceae) [Pringle *et al.*, 1994: 320].

*Blepharis capensis* (L.f.) Pers. (Acanthaceae) [Woodhall, 2005a].

**\**Alenia sandaster* (Trimen, 1868)#**  
**Karoo Speckled Sandman**



Karoo Dancer (*Alenia sandaster*) males. Images courtesy Steve Woodhall.

*Pyrgus sandaster* Trimen, 1868. *Transactions of the Entomological Society of London* **1868**: 92 (69-96).  
*Pyrgus sandaster* Trimen, 1868. Trimen & Bowker, 1889.  
*Alenia sandaster* Trimen. Swanepoel, 1953a.  
*Alenia sandaster* (Trimen, 1868). Dickson & Kroon, 1978.  
*Alenia sandaster* (Trimen, 1868). Pringle *et al.*, 1994: 320.



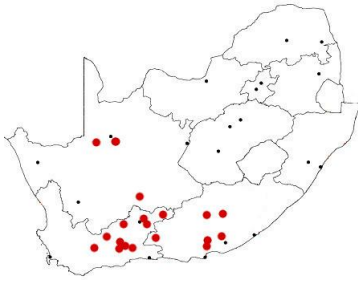
*Alenia sandaster*. Male (Wingspan 25 mm). Left – upperside; right – underside.  
 Keimoes, Northern Cape Province, South Africa. 24 March 2009. O. Garvie.  
 Images M.C. Williams ex Dobson Collection.



*Alenia sandaster*. Female. Left – upperside; right – underside.  
 Beaufort West, Western Cape Province, South Africa. 9 October 1967. A.B. Pringle.  
 Images M.C. Williams ex Pringle Collection.

**Alternative common name:** Karoo Dansertjie (Afrikaans).

**Type locality:** [South Africa]: “near Murraysburg”. Holotype (female) in the Natural History Museum, London.



**Distribution:** South Africa  
(Eastern Cape Province – west,  
Western Cape Province – north-  
east, Northern Cape Province).

**Specific localities:**

Eastern Cape Province – Port Elizabeth (Swanepoel, 1953); Uitenhage (Swanepoel, 1953); Coerney (Swanepoel, 1953); Addo (Swanepoel, 1953); Grahamstown (Swanepoel, 1953); Glenconner (Swanepoel, 1953); Fish River (Swanepoel, 1953); Fort Brown (Pringle *et al.*, 1994); Tarkastad (Mecenero *et al.*, 2013).

Western Cape Province – Murraysburg (TL); Calitzdorp (Swanepoel, 1953); Oudtshoorn (Swanepoel, 1953); Kandelaars (Swanepoel, 1953); Beaufort West (Pringle *et al.*, 1994); Ladismith (Mecenero *et al.*, 2013).

Northern Cape Province – Fraserburg (Pringle *et al.*, 1994); Upington (E. Pringle; single male); Keimoes (Garvie & Williams, 2009).

**Habitat:** Inhabits a large part of the Nama Karoo, in the three Cape Provinces of South Africa.

**Habits:** Colonies are found in dry, stony places where the host-plants grow (Pringle *et al.*, 1994). Both sexes feed from flowers, and are especially fond of those of the succulent mesembryanthemums (Pringle *et al.*, 1994). Specimens have a rapid, buzzing flight, low down and rest on the ground or on stones. Males establish territories near the host-plants or in dry river beds and gullies (Pringle *et al.*, 1994).

**Flight period:** August to January. There are a few records for February (Pringle *et al.*, 1994). Garvie and Williams found the species near Keimoes in March.

**Early stages:**

Clark, *in* Dickson & Kroon, 1978: 242; plate 19 [as *Alenia sandaster*; Addo and Uitenhage, both Eastern Cape].

“Egg: 0.6 mm diameter by 0.5 mm high, with 12 or 13 longitudinal ribs, reduced to 7 at micropyle, and about 16 staggered cross-ribs. Laid singly on a bud, and yellow when laid, changing to pale green, then dull gold. Incubation period 8 to 12 days. Egg-shell is not eaten. Larva: 1<sup>st</sup> instar 1.5 growing to 3 mm in 8 to 15 days; 2<sup>nd</sup> instar 3 growing to 4.5 mm in 7 to 8 days; 3<sup>rd</sup> instar 4.5 growing to 6 mm in 7 to 8 days; 4<sup>th</sup> instar 6 growing to 8 mm in 7 to 8 days; 5<sup>th</sup> instar 8 growing to 11 mm in 7 to 8 days; 6<sup>th</sup> instar 11 growing to 16.5 mm in 12 days. These periods are very variable, as larvae may go into partial diapause during a very dry season when the plant dries up; 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> instar larvae were found in the same locality on 15 August 1954. The young larva eats its way into a young bud. When this is hollowed out it enters another bud. If the plant withers the larva remains dormant until the plant revives. The duration of the instars can thus be very erratic. The final instar is generally completed amongst the seeds. A hole for egress is eaten through the seed-pod and, if necessary, through a leaf as well. The hole is covered with silk until needed, or may be blocked by the head of the larva. There is slight colour variation in the larva. Pupa: 11 mm; emergence after 15 to 37 days, or longer. Parasites: A species of Chalcid recorded, ex larva in 3<sup>rd</sup> instar. In wet seasons when the foodplant remains green there is more than one brood, and there may be as many as three. Recorded from eggs and larvae from Addo and Uitenhage, C.P.”

**Larval food:**

*Barleria* species (Acanthaceae) [Dickson & Kroon, 1978: 189].

*Blepharis capensis* (L.f.) Pers. (Acanthaceae) [Dickson & Kroon, 1978: 189].