

## Newsletter of the Lepidopterists' Society of Southern Africa

Editor: M.C. Williams, P O Box 12580, Onderstepoort, 0110, RSA

Correspondence: The Secretary, Lepidopterists' Society of Southern Africa, 6 Verne Road, Florida North 1710.

### Editorial

It has been, for me, a most enjoyable experience compiling, editing and producing the first six numbers of *Metamorphosis*. My greatest regret is that time, that commodity in such short supply, has not allowed me to enter into personal correspondence with members. So, to all of you who have contributed articles or taken the trouble to make comments or pass on informational tid-bits, my sincere thanks.

As I will be editing the newsletter for the next two years, and as I have never made any statements about my editorial policy, I would like to take this opportunity of doing so. From its inception, I have regarded the newsletter as a forum for the sharing of knowledge, ideas and opinions among members. Now that we are a fully-fledged society (see below) these aims, in my opinion, become more important. I have in the past, published and will continue to publish, contributions from members in which opinion with which I disagree is expressed. Should any member dispute any fact, idea or opinion contained in a contribution he should not direct criticism at the editor but should submit a letter to the editor for inclusion in a future number of *Metamorphosis*. As long as this criticism is objective and refrains from personal attacks on the author I will publish it. After all, done in the right spirit, both contributor and critic should learn from the experience. This is the kind of interaction a healthy society needs and grows on!

Should you be unhappy about my editing in a particular matter you are, of course, at liberty to write to the Committee. But please remember: not even editors are infallible!

### Synopsis of minutes of first committee meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> April 1984

M.C. Williams

1. The percentage poll for the election of the standing committee in March was approximately 30%.
2. Renaming of the group was discussed and it was decided that the group will in future be known as 'The Lepidopterists' Society of Southern Africa'. By becoming a society it is hoped that donations from interested parties will be facilitated. All donations will be published in *Metamorphosis*.
3. From now on ALL correspondence must be sent to the secretary. This includes subscriptions and any contributions to *Metamorphosis*. For correct address see the top of page one of this newsletter.
4. The Department of Education will be contacted regarding a subsidy to the Society.
5. A general meeting and workshop will be held in Pretoria (at Onderstepoort) on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of August 1984. Details and registration forms will be posted to all members under separate cover.

6. The Director of the Department of Environmental Affairs will be notified of the establishment of the Society.
7. The Transvaal Provincial Administration will be requested to notify the Society of any proposed legislation affecting the collecting or study of Lepidoptera.
8. It was decided that junior members (i.e. those under 18 years of age) pay subscriptions of R5 from 1985.
9. A competition among members for the design of an emblem for the Society will be held. Details will appear in a forthcoming issue of *Metamorphosis*.

### **Reply from Roodepoort City authorities regarding *Aloeides dentatis***

M.C. Williams

In reply to my letter (published in *Metamorphosis* 1 (6)) the following communication was received from the Town Clerk:

Parks and Recreation Division  
1984/05/09

The Chairman  
Lepidoptera Study Group of Southern Africa  
P.O. Box 12538  
ONDERSTEPOORT  
0110

Dr Williams

Thank you for your most informative letter dated 26 March 1984.

The matter of the preservation of 22 stands at Ruimsig is presently receiving serious attention on Council official level. An item to my Council, recommending the preservation of this site, will most probably be tabled at the May Council Meeting. The 22 stands involved have been frozen and will not be sold until a final decision by my Council has been taken.

Your recommendations regarding the preservation of the site together with the appropriate information on insect conservation have been studied and the essence of this will be incorporated in the report to my Council.

At this stage it is not possible to give an indication as to what the outcome of the Council's decision will be, but I assure you that everything within the means of this organization will be done to secure the survival of this unique ecological niche provided that this project does not severely impede the economic viability of the Ruimsig development.

The interest taken in this project, by the Lepidoptera Study Group of Southern Africa and by you personally, is highly appreciated. In view of the unusual nature of this project my Council may require a personal interview with you and representatives of your study group. In such an event I shall notify you in good time.

## Letter to the Editor

D.A. Swanepoel

Dear Readers,

Has the study group been born a lame horse or a 'steeksperd' on a racing track reluctant to be off when the gong sounds? So far, in my opinion, the reaction of the study group members to articles in *Metamorphosis* has been perplexingly flaccid. One wonders if his article was appreciated? How many members have so far responded with short notes to the writer? - "Hi Stoffel old man, I enjoyed your article, please write some more." An animated expression of appreciation, however trifling, stimulates the would-be contributor to greater efforts. Everyone has some butterfly experiences he would like to recount, but if not encouraged will simply sit back with folded arms and maybe become a cynic.

Come dear readers let's cheer one another up now and then with short notes of thanks etc.

Sincerely yours

D.A. Swanepoel  
P.O. Box 264, Duiwelskloof 0835.

## Letter to the Editor

Ruth Southey

Mrs Ruth Southey writes:

Dr William Manning, an Anglican Bishop in George returned recently (October 1983) from a three month trip overseas, where he represented South Africa at the great ecumenical conference in Rome. While in London he visited the London Butterfly House at Syan Park, situated opposite Kew Gardens across the Thames River. He gave me a souvenir issue of their booklet, and I thought it might be of interest to S.A. collectors going to the U.K. to know of this remarkable place. I quote: "Here visitors stroll around tropical greenhouse gardens among free flying butterflies from all over the world, the first butterfly 'safari park' on this scale in Europe. All stages of breeding including egg laying, caterpillar rearing and courtship displays among tropical flowers may be closely observed and photographed. There is a separate section devoted to educational and pictorial displays as well as an exhibition of other fascinating live insects like giant spiders, leaf-cutting ants, stick insects and locusts."

Sadly, in their list of tropical and sub-tropical species which are used, there was no mention of South African, or indeed African species.

## Letter to the Editor

Anonymous

From a member who wishes to remain anonymous:

The famous N.D. Riley C.B.E. was a great raconteur with a fine sense of humour especially in matters entomological. These included many anecdotes. One such delightful incident he used to recount took place many years ago in the Pyrenees when he was collecting with one of the Adkin family. The wives were sitting down watching operations when a French couple came along. The young woman enquired what the two men were doing with their nets, to which the answer: "They appear to be catching butterflies". "But they look quite intelligent" came the disarming reply.

### **The discovery of a new satyrid from the Transvaal**

G.A. Henning, 1 Harry Lawrence Street, Florida Park, Florida 1710.

One morning early in December 1981, Nolan Owen-Johnston and myself drove to Wakkerstroom in the south-eastern Transvaal in search of a particular species of *Aloeides*, which is to be found on the mountains near the town.

The weather was fine and sunny until we arrived at the top of the escarpment between Wakkerstroom and Piet Retief where we found the locality covered in cloud. We parked in the cloud and undaunted by the weather climbed to the summit of the mountain and began searching. The cloud was so thick at the top that I seemed to be floating. I could only see about two metres of ground around my feet. On one of the few occasions that a filtered sun shone through I was surprised to see a specimen of *Dingana* flying along the slope towards me. I caught it and immediately noticed the extensive orange-red areas on the forewings. The specimen was in very poor condition and had obviously been on the wing for quite some time. I considered the possibility that it was an aberrant specimen of *Dingana dingana*. Very little else was collected that day and the only noteworthy species were *Pseudonympha magoides* and *Lepidochrysops lacrimosa*.

A closer examination of the specimen revealed certain other differences and I was sure it was a new species. Many visitors were shown the specimen and much discussion ensued, I always said that all I needed was one more specimen to conclusively prove that it is a new species.

Almost a year later in November 1982 Nolan, my sister-in-law Lindsey Beveridge and myself again journeyed to Wakkerstroom and again we had perfect weather until we arrived at the locality, which was covered in cloud. We decided to persevere and Nolan took the right hand side and Lindsey and myself the left. About three hundred metres from the road, on a small rise, a filtered ray of sun shone through and a specimen of *Dingana* glided past me from around a lichen-covered rock. I knew at once that it was exactly the same as my first specimen. After netting it I was beside myself with joy, I shouted and danced and for several minutes I could not control myself sufficiently to remove the specimen from the net. Lindsey stared at me astounded, having never seen such a reaction from anyone before.

The cloud cover began to clear shortly afterwards and when we reached the spot at which I had caught the first specimen, which was on the far side of the peak, the weather was quite reasonable. Along the slope a fair number of the new *Dingana* were seen and a good type series was collected. At about one o'clock the clouds returned and we made our way back to the car.

Nolan had found a couple on the other side of the road so we decided to search further down the mountain towards Wakkerstroom where the weather was still fine. We investigated a likely looking ridge about five km from the first locality. Here, after much searching, I found another specimen so it appears that the species is quite widespread in the area.

The name I chose for the new species was *Dingana alaedeus*, which was supposed to mean 'winged god' as in mythology the gods were supposed to live on the mountain tops. But we later found the name to mean 'god of the wing'. I never did pass my latin exams at school!

The description was completed and sent to the Durban Museum for publication. The description of *Dingana alaedeus* Henning & Henning was published in January 1984 [Reference, below]. The species differs from *Dingana dingana* by being smaller and slighter with a darker ground colour. The forewing patch is orange-red and is very large, extending over almost half the forewing. There are also differences in the configuration of the markings on the hindwing underside, which shows some affinity to *Dingana bowkeri*. The type series will eventually be spread amongst several museums and many collections throughout the Republic.

The species was collected at the same locality in October 1983 by Izak Coetzer. The flight period for this species is therefore from the middle of October to early December. I did not visit the locality during 1983 but will attempt to do the life history during 1984.

#### REFERENCE

HENNING, G.A., & HENNING, S.F. 1984. A new species of *Dingana* van Son (Lepidoptera: Satyridae) from the south-eastern Transvaal, South Africa. *Durban Museum Novitates* **13** (12): 149-154.

#### Notes on *Acraea lygus* Druce

D.A. Swanepoel, P.O. Box 264, Duiwelskloof 0835

The sporadic appearance of this butterfly in the R.S.A. has been baffling top-brass collectors for decades. Now and then a specimen was taken here and there in the country. Very few collectors can claim they returned home after a day's outing with a dozen or two in their collecting boxes. Literature enumerating the habits and distribution of the butterfly is very scant or just about non-existent. The most information so far documented was by van Son in his book on the *Acraeas*.

Way back in the twenties when the butterfly was still called *Acraea stenobea* form *lygus*, H.E. Irving urged me to be on the lookout for it as it was supposed to be a very rare butterfly. I was successful enough to capture two specimens at Ladybrand, which I duly presented to Irving. He had also taken a couple around Bloemfontein.

After the far northern Transvaal had been in the throes of a severe drought for several years rain storms came sweeping across it in February 1967 and turned the bushveld into a tapestry of fairyland grandeur. Flowers and strange grasses rarely seen there sprung up as though from nowhere, suggesting the doings of a magic wand. In all the years I visited the area I

have never before witnessed such a delightful spectacle. What made me go there I shall never know.

It was on that wonderful farm Swartklip, where I had discovered *Lepidochrysops vansonii* one year that the magical spectacle of the flowers, casting an entrancing lustre on the myriads of butterflies, was at its peak. Normally seen there in some numbers *Acraea stenobea* was conspicuous by its absence that year, but in its place *Acraea lygus* was swarming everywhere. Nothing could have gladdened the heart of a collector more.

During the abnormal migration of *Catopsilia florella* in March 1966 dozens of *Acraea lygus* were seen about the streets of Ladybrand; apparently taking part in the flight as did other species of butterflies not normally seen there. The capture of a specimen or two at other Free State towns has been heard of now and then. One was seen about the grassveld of Paul Roux one year. Not so long ago a perfect female was captured in the bush at the small Saltpan near Pretoria. One year a freshly emerged male was captured among the lush grass and shrubs of Haenertsburg in the Transvaal. A lot of mystery appears to surround the distribution of this butterfly.