



PREFACE

As much as we mostly encounter and study Lepidoptera when they are in their adult stage, they actually spend most of their lives and have the biggest impact on their surroundings during the larval stage. It is this astounding diversity of butterfly and moth (“buttermoth”) caterpillars who have found their way by feeding on their hosts into almost every nook and cranny of vegetated communities of life across the globe and yet we know so little about them and their host associations.

What started as a fun challenge for one year to encourage others to take up the study and documentation of South African moth caterpillars and their hosts, has become a life unto itself. The Caterpillar Rearing Group (CRG) of the Lepidopterists’ Society of Africa today is an active group of some seventy enthusiasts. Most of us are South African but some of us reside in other African countries and some in Europe. We rear to adult any Afrotropical Lepidoptera caterpillars we encounter and record as much as we can in the process.

The CRG has been a fascinating journey for me personally, and I get this fuzzy feeling of anticipation every time my inbox contains a new rearing submission from one of our group. I have learnt so much in just a few years. The other day I had run a bath and left the lights on. I only managed to get to take the bath a few hours later and as a result there were many moths floating around on the surface. What was fascinating about this was that as I was removing them one by one I realised that I actually knew what the caterpillars of almost all the moth species in the bath were feeding on! This would not have been possible just five years ago and I have been living here for thirty years. All thanks to the CRG.

This supplement to the first article published by the CRG (*Metamorphosis* 27: 46–59) details all the submissions of rearings received up until the end of 2015, comprising some 975 species. The submissions are continuing to flow in and at the time of writing this preface we have 1471 species recorded. The entries in these pages show only the basic information received and for most of the rearings there is a wealth of additional unpublished information available to those who want to know more about a particular species or group. All you need to do is contact me and I will put you in touch with the originator of the information.

The 2019 Lepidoptera host associations recorded by the CRG so far, together with the previously published host associations accumulated by Doug Kroon over the years, form already a substantial database of such associations for the Afrotropical region. This database is becoming a useful resource for further analyses such as the study of possible parallel phylogenies between the Lepidoptera and their larval hosts.

I look forward eagerly to the continuing expansion of CRG activities and hope that we will receive many more entries, particularly from other African countries, where there is a still whole world of new scientific discoveries to be made!

Hermann S. Staude

hermann@busmark.co.za

31st December 2016