

NOTE

Further observations on the butterflies of Mauritius (Lepidoptera: Papilionoidea)

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INTRODUCTION

Recent publications on the butterflies of Mauritius include Williams (2007), Lawrence (2016), Pyrcz (2017) and Moore & Sáfíán (2018). The note published here provides additional observations on *C. cithaeron* and three other species of Mauritian butterflies.

OBSERVATIONS

C. cithaeron

During an inspection of the collection of Jacques Siedlecki, housed at the Insectarium at La Vanille Réserve des Mascareignes in Rivière des Anguilles, Mauritius, it was confirmed that the first known specimens of *C. cithaeron* were collected in Mauritius by Jacques Siedlecki in June 2014 at La Vanille Réserve in the south of Mauritius (Fig. 1). The second author (IB) was contacted by Owen Griffiths (the co-founder of La Vanille) in June 2014 to assist with the identification of this butterfly. He tentatively identified it as *C. cithaeron* and this was confirmed by the third author (SC) at the African Butterfly Research Institute (ABRI), Nairobi.

Subsequent to the photographing of *C. cithaeron* by Anthony Moore in September 2017 at La Vallée de Ferney on the east coast, this butterfly has also been collected on the west coast of Mauritius. The first two authors (PW & IB) collected several specimens at Grande Rivière Noir and one at Le Morne Brabant, in June 2018 (Fig. 2). This evidence shows that *C. cithaeron* has become established on Mauritius, at least in the short-term, it also appears probable that it may become a long-term addition to the butterfly fauna

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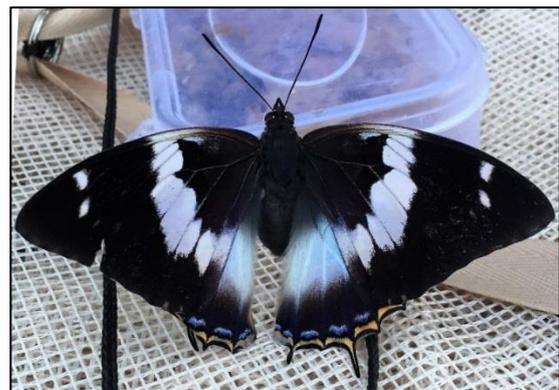
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I. Bampton

Figure 1 – A male *C. cithaeron* collected by J. Siedlecki in June 2014 at La Vanille Réserve, Mauritius.



I. Bampton

Figure 2 – Female *C. cithaeron* collected by I. Bampton & P.R.F. Ward in June 2018 at Le Morne Brabant, Mauritius.

Danaus plexippus (the American Monarch)

This species was reported during 1983 and 1985 (Williams, 2007), but has not been seen since on Mauritius (or Reunion). D'Abbrera (1997) predicted that *D. plexippus* would reach the African Mainland soon, but this has not yet happened.

Hypolimnias anthedon drucei

This taxon was considered to be very rare in Mauritius, but this could be due to a lack of people

reporting or sampling the butterfly fauna. In the last decade it has been observed frequently, with at least two forms having been collected (*anthon* and *dubius*). J.C.H. Dobson captured a specimen at the Black River Gorges on 4 January 2007 (Lawrence, 2016). Pycz (2017) reported them at Grande Rivière Noire on 25/26 December 2016 as follows: “Over two days as many as 12 individuals were seen flying actively along the river margins, usually well inside the riverine forest in shaded places, but occasionally overflying open areas and roads. Both males and females were seen”. A similar experience was had in June 2018 by two of the authors (PW & IB) on the access road to the Black River Gorges.

***Erionota torus* (previously confused with *E. thrax*)**

This species was reported by Williams (2007) to have become rare following the introduction of parasitic wasps (the foodplant is banana and it is considered a pest). However, we have observed stable populations in certain areas of the island and there is a resident breeding population in the garden of one of the authors (IB) in Le Morne.

DISCUSSION

Since the second edition of Williams (2007), there has been an increased interest in the Lepidoptera from the island. This is very important to inform and monitor the current status of Mauritian Lepidoptera, and is especially relevant given the threats posed by increasing anthropogenic destruction and degradation of the natural vegetation, and the inadvertent introduction of alien species of flora and fauna. Natural migrations may also result in changes to the composition of the butterfly fauna. Concerted efforts are needed in order to conserve the endemic taxa and to restore tracts of land to their original state.

Being a relatively small island, Mauritius provides a unique opportunity to monitor and understand the impact humankind can have on nature and the resiliency of ecosystems. This will require long-term, ongoing monitoring.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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