

NOTE

Description of the male of *Syrmoptera mixtura* (Hulstaert, 1924) (Papilionoidea: Lycaenidae: Theclinae) in Northern DRC

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INTRODUCTION

Syrmoptera mixtura was originally described as *Oxylides mixtura* by Gustaaf Hulstaert (1924), based on two females found in the collections of the Royal Museum for Central Africa. Neither was designated as holotype, but rather they were labelled as co-types. These two specimens were collected by Belgian lieutenant Florent Colmant in 1895 while stationed at “Sémio” in the Sassa region of Congo Free State. Congo Free State now being the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Zemio (Sémio) a town in the Central African Republic on the border with the province of Bas-Uele, DRC.

Later, Stempffer (1961) treated *mixtura* as a synonym of *Syrmoptera homeyerii* Dewitz, 1879. Libert (2004) revised the genus and recognised that the ventral wing surface of the *S. mixtura* co-types differs noticeably from that of *S. homeyerii*. Further, there is significant allopatry between the two species with *S. homeyerii* being restricted to southern DRC; the Angolan holotype being a sole exception (Fig. 1). Consequently, he reinstated *mixtura* as a good species.

Libert also postulated that, given the resemblance of the ventral wing surface between females of *S. mixtura* and *Syrmoptera bonifacei* Stempffer, 1961, the male of the former species would likely bear a strong resemblance to the latter. *S. bonifacei* is largely concentrated from eastern Nigeria to the area around Bangui, CAR, but is known, from a very small number of specimens, to be found as far east as South Sudan's western border (Fig. 1). This implies a possible sympatry between *S. mixtura* and *S. bonifacei* which could further complicate identification. Fortunately, the females are dissimilar – *S. mixtura* is blue dorsally, while *S. bonifacei* is white – and so are a key aid in the identification process.

OBSERVATIONS

A July–August 2019 trip by the author to the Sasa Chiefdom in Bas-Uele, led to the capture of two more females and, for the first time since the species' discovery,

four males of *S. mixtura*. Two of the males were collected together with the females on 24 July 2019 at Sukadi, Bas-Uele. The other two males were found at a second location, Bangu, Bas-Uele, on 1 August 2019.

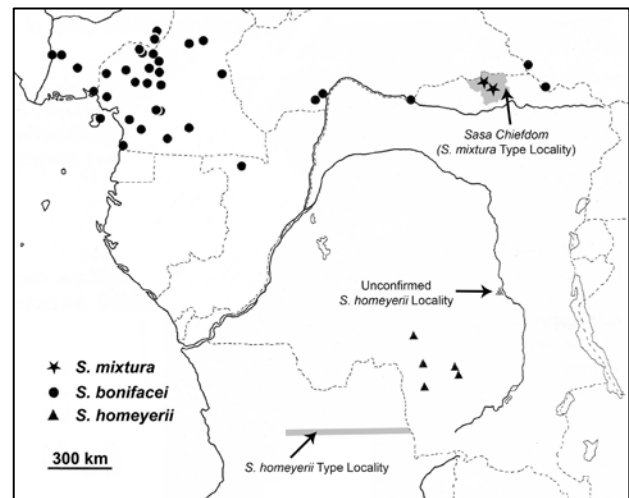


Figure 1 – Distribution map of *Syrmoptera* species - adapted with permission from Libert (2004).

DESCRIPTION

Syrmoptera mixtura (Hulstaert, 1924)

Specimens examined

S. mixtura (Fig. 2: A1, A2)

2♂, 2♀: DRC, Bas-Uele, Ango Territory, Sasa Chiefdom, Sukadi; 4°37'04"N, 25°50'17"E; 650 m; 24.vii.2019, leg. T. Desloges in coll. ABRI, Nairobi; 2♂: DRC, Bas-Uele, Ango Territory, Sasa Chiefdom, Bangu; 4°51'50"N, 25°26'30"E; 600 m; 01.viii.2019, leg. T. Desloges in coll. ABRI, Nairobi.

S. bonifacei (Fig. 2: B1, B2)

1♂, 2♀: CAR, Yakoli, x.1996, leg. S. Collins in coll. ABRI, Nairobi; 1♂: CAR, Yakoli, v.1998, in coll. ABRI, Nairobi; 2♂: CAR, Yakoli, x.1995, leg. S. Collins in coll. ABRI, Nairobi; 1♂: CAR, Yakoli, ii.1997, in coll. ABRI, Nairobi; 2♂: CAR, nr. Bangui, i.1997, leg. S. Collins in coll. ABRI, Nairobi; 3♂: CAR, Bangui, ii.1994, leg. S. Collins in coll. ABRI, Nairobi.

Description and diagnosis

The male of *S. mixtura* strongly resembles that of *S. bonifacei*. The key difference between the two is found in the ventral bands. In *S. mixtura* these bands are slightly wider than in *S. bonifacei*, are light ochre, thinly edged in

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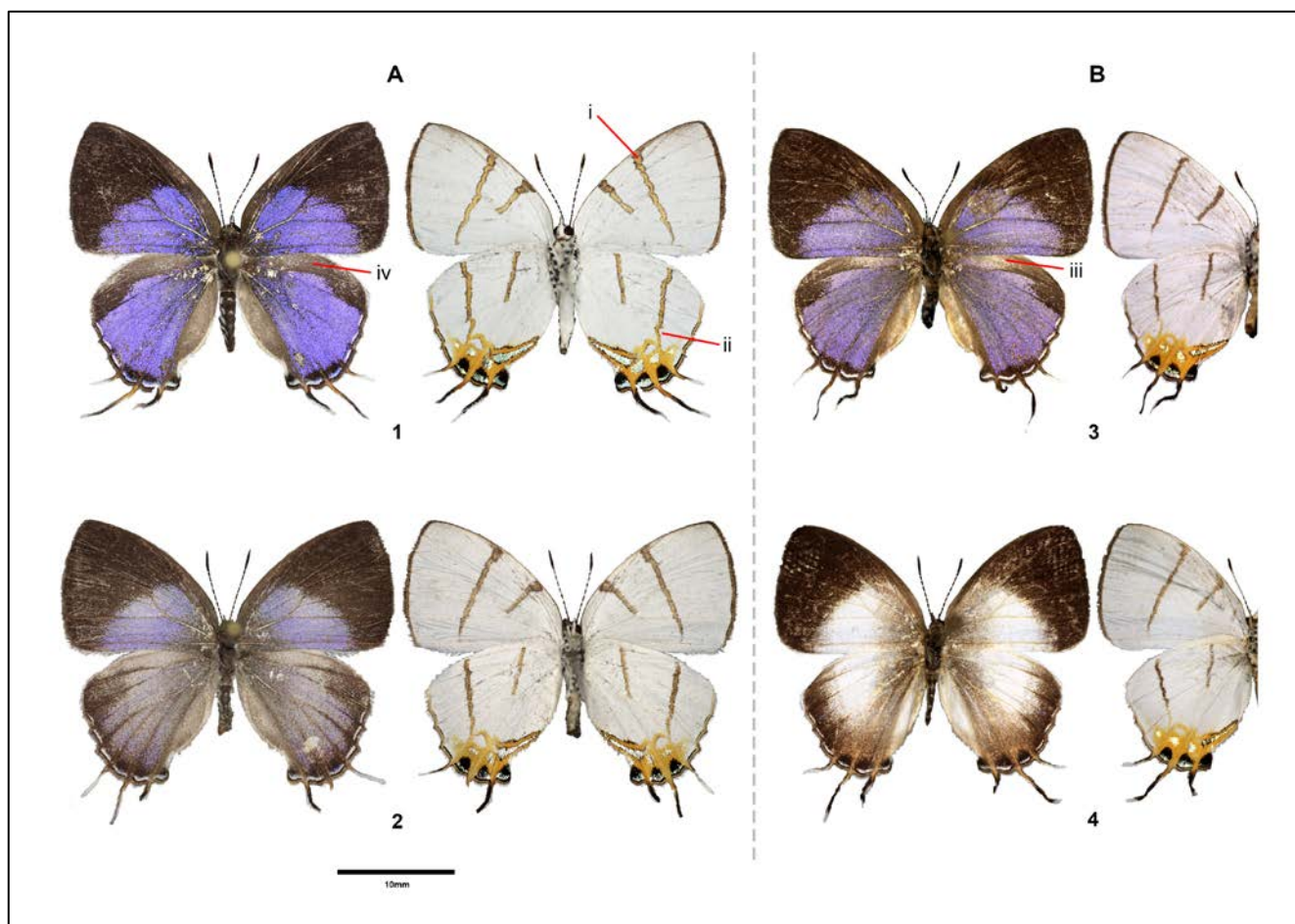


Figure 2 – Column A: *Syrmoptera mixtura* A1: ♂ DRC, Bas-Uele, Ango Territory, Sasa Chiefdom, Bangu; 4°51'50"N, 25°26'30"E; 600 m; 1.viii.2019; A2: ♀ DRC, Bas-Uele, Ango Territory, Sasa Chiefdom, Sukadi; 4°37'04"N, 25°50'17"E; 650 m; 24.vii.2019. Column B: *Syrmoptera bonifacei* B3: ♂ CAR, Bangui; ii.1994; B4: ♀ CAR, Yakoli; x.1996.

black (Fig. 2: A1-i), and, on the hindwing, extend downwards to meet the ochre tornal area at vein 3 (Fig. 2: A1-ii). In *S. bonifacei* the ventral bands are darker and quite variable in prominence, sometimes being reduced or even non-existent. Another somewhat variable difference can be found on the dorsal surface of the hindwing. In males of *S. bonifacei*, the basal area of space 7, from near the root of vein 7 and inwards, is more or less covered by light blue scaling (Fig. 2: B3-iii). In *S. mixtura*, this blue scaling is comparatively reduced in extent, giving the impression that the black costal band reaches the base of the wing (Fig. 2: A1-iv). Further specimens of male *S. mixtura* would be necessary to confirm the consistency of this second characteristic.

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