

## Newsletter of the Lepidopterists' Society of Southern Africa

Editors: M.C. & J. Williams, P O Box 12580, Onderstepoort, 0110, RSA

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

### President's comment

Mark Williams

It is well known that the activities of butterfly collectors generally have little impact on the strength of butterfly populations. Compared to the natural enemies of butterflies man is a rather hopeless and insignificant predator. Even a deliberate attempt to catch all the adults in a small, localised population of a particular species is not likely to result in extirpation, although it may conceivably temporarily weaken the colony.

However, with increasing knowledge of the ecology of especially the early stages of our butterfly fauna the situation may need to be reviewed. Information in regard to where eggs, larvae or pupae may be found in the habitat should be used responsibly. Stephen Henning, in an earlier edition of *Metamorphosis*, alluded to the dangers of excessively disturbing lycaenid host-ant colonies; Loranthaceae, the *Iolais* species foodplants, should never be torn off the host trees while searching for early stages; the collection of colonial larvae (e.g. *Cymothoe alcimeda*) in large numbers should not be practiced.

I appeal to you, one and all, to consider these aspects and to always cause the least possible disturbance of the habitat. At all times consider the free-flying insect in its natural state as more important than the dead ones in your collection.

### New Members

Ernest Bajada - Sliema, Malta  
Andrew Bennett - Port Elizabeth, Cape  
Danny Burk - Indiana, USA  
Augusto Cabral - Maputo, Mozambique  
Bruce Cairncross - Johannesburg, Transvaal  
Steve Collins - Nairobi, Kenya  
Malcolm Douglas - California, USA  
Henk Geertsema - Bellville, Cape  
Jean Hampton - Brackendowns, Transvaal  
J. Hayes-E'Silva - East London, Cape  
J.M. Kriek - Pretoria, Transvaal  
D.E. Marais - Noupoot, Cape  
Louis McBean - Brackendowns, Transvaal  
Jacques Rigout - Venette, France  
Mark Sitter - Oregon, USA  
Steve Stone - Colorado, USA  
Werner Techman - Kuilsrivier, Cape  
Ben Terblanche - Messina, Transvaal  
John Wall - New York, USA  
Christo Woite - Graskop, Transvaal

## Letter to the Editor

Patrick Whittle

Patrick Whittle of Roma, Lesotho has been collecting butterflies in this country for the past five years and intends to publish a checklist of the butterflies of Lesotho. He would be interested in hearing from anyone who has collected butterflies in Lesotho as "records are few and far between". He writes: "We have had a couple of bad years for Lepidoptera, but with good rains this summer (1985/86), the population of butterflies in Lesotho seems to be much better. Changing agricultural practices seem to be affecting the situation somewhat."

## Letter to the Editor

Hans Wagner

Hans Wagner of Birnam Park writes: "Greetings to all comrades with nets. To me it was a pleasure to reveal new localities to fellow collectors.... until ten years later when, alas, upon return to a particular favourite haunt all the rare material had been cleaned out. This happened to *Aphnaeus hutchinsonii* in 1930, again in 1942 with same plus *Iolaus alienus* and in 1939 with *Golianthus albosignatus* (Coleoptera). This streak in my fellow entomologists taught me a bitter lesson.... never reveal localities where near extinct material is to be found. It is obvious that there are those with no thought or respect for the youngsters who would like to carry on with this noble hobby into the future. I could but will not mention names; let it be on their conscience, and may they enjoy the money received from the extinction of rare material!!! I have rediscovered *A. hutchinsonii* and *I. alienus*, in limited quantities, at two new locations, but.... no comment. Keep the good work of *Metamorphosis* going so that it can spread the gospel to all the newcomers.... to collect for the joy of the hobby and not for its greed, destruction and money. PS - I have not managed to re-establish *G. albosignatus*, maybe DDT and not MAN has done this villainous deed; comments from fellow readers may be able to unravel this riddle."

## Publications on southern African butterflies

Dave Hancock

Dave Hancock of the Bulawayo Museum in Zimbabwe has compiled a bibliography of the books and papers dealing with butterflies in southern Africa that have been published since the text of 'Pennington's butterflies' was completed [1978] (or were not included in the first place). As this list is too long to include in a single issue of *Metamorphosis* it will be published in parts. This first part lists publications for 1977 and 1978.

COTTRELL, C.B. 1978. Aspects of the biogeography of Southern African butterflies, revealed by an investigation of the nature of the Cape butterfly fauna. Supplement to *Zambesia* 1978: i-viii, 1-100.

DE JONG, R. 1978. Monograph of the genus *Spialia* Swinhoe (Lepidoptera, Hesperidae). *Tijdschrift voor Entomologie* **121**: 23-146. (*S. depauperata australis* ssp. n.; incorrectly called *S. abscondita* (Plötz) in Pennington).

- DICKSON, C.G.C. 1977. A new species of the *Phasis thero* (L.) group (Lepidoptera: Lycaenidae) from the Roggeveld Escarpment. *Entomologist's Record and Journal of Variation* **89**: 317-319. (*P. pringlei* sp. n.).
- DICKSON, C.G.C. 1978. Note on an apparently new species of *Colotis* Hübner (Lepidoptera: Pieridae) from South West Africa. *Entomologist's Record and Journal of Variation* **90**: 185-186.
- DICKSON, C.G.C. 1978. Two new *Poecilmitis* Butler (Lepidoptera: Lycaenidae) from the Hantam's Berg, Western Cape Province. *Entomologist's Record and Journal of Variation* **90**: 293-296. (*P. lysander hantamsbergae* ssp. n.; *P. stepheni* sp. n.).
- HENNING, S.F. 1978. Description of a new subspecies of *Charaxes jahlusa* Trimen (Lepidoptera: Nymphalidae) from Southern Africa. *Entomologist's Record and Journal of Variation* **90**: 211-215. (*C. jahlusa rex* ssp. n.).
- QUICKELBERGE, C.D. 1977. Systematic notes on Southern African butterflies - 1. *Durban Museum Novitates* **11**: 177-180. (on *Pseudacraea eurytus* f. *pondo*).
- QUICKELBERGE, C.D. 1977. Systematic notes on Southern African butterflies - 2. *Durban Museum Novitates* **11**: 239-245. (*Stygionympha scotina* sp. n.).
- QUICKELBERGE, C.D. 1978. The systematics of the genus *Dira* Hübner (Lepidoptera: Satyrinae), with a description of a new subspecies of *Dira clytus* (Linnaeus). *Entomologist's Record and Journal of Variation* **90**: 25-32. (*Dira clytus eurina* ssp. n.).
- WHITE, R.S. 1978. A new form of *Charaxes penricei penricei* (Lepidoptera: Nymphalidae) from Rhodesia. *Entomologist's Record and Journal of Variation* **90**: 57. (*C. penricei penricei* ab. *paraperpullus*).

### Observations on the life-history of *Iolaus (Epamera) australis* Stevenson (Lycaenidae)

R.D. Paré, P.O. Box 183, Bindura, Zimbabwe

The early stages of *Iolaus australis* have not been described so I consider it well worthwhile to record my observations of this very interesting species. I welcome any discussion this article might generate, especially from the lycaenid experts.

The food-plant used is *Tieghemia quinqueruvia* (Hochst.) Balle, a common parasite of *Brachystegia boehmii* Taub, a species which is predominant in the Bindura area of Zimbabwe. Ian Mullin was the first to find the larva, in early 1984, but it was only when the imago emerged that we knew it was *I. australis*. No eggs have been seen, which seems to suggest that either they are laid on the stems of either the food-plant or even the host plant, or that the larvae eat the shells after hatching, unlike any other *Iolaus* we have studied. Indeed, often the first indication of the presence of most *Iolaus* larvae is the finding of hatched eggs on the plant. Another possibility is that the *australis* egg is dark in colour to blend in with the stems. I wouldn't put anything past this crafty little chap!

The larva is dark grey-brown with a paler 'x'-mark when viewed dorsally, and very closely resembles an ant-associated homopteran which is commonly found on the same plant. Even the first instar larva is coloured like this, unlike most lycaenids, where the first instar larvae are quite

different in appearance to the later stages. We have never found more than two larvae on a food-plant, no matter how large – this seems significant as a method for ensuring survival by dispersing the population as widely as possible.

The larvae eat out typical troughs in the leaf, although these are much more irregular in shape than other *Iolaus* species. The fourth instar larva works its way down a leaf from the tip to the base in the usual manner with the front segments wrapped around the leaf. An interesting feature of the larva is the ragged, fleshy 'frill' along its sides, where they contact the leaf surface. We have not found pupae in the wild, hence we cannot say where *australis* pupates. However, in captivity we have found that the larva backs into a fork in a twig and pupates, head down, tucked in against the twig to resemble a knob of bark. We have noted that its colour closely matches that of the twig. It taps on its support when disturbed, as with other *Iolaus* pupae. This habit has always seemed of doubtful value to us since it would seem to draw attention from would-be predators to a pupa which is well camouflaged in the first place!

The adult *australis* emerges after 12 to 14 days, although it would be safe to assume that pupae from March-April probably overwinter until August. Another interesting feature of the pupa is a velvety-black circular dorsal spot looking exactly like a parasite exit hole. The pupa of *I. trimeni* Wallengren has a similar spot, as do some *Charaxes* larvae. Surely another ploy to discourage predators?

The adult *australis* is a handsome creature – we find the females particularly fascinating, possibly because we had never seen one before! They are very seldom seen in the wild, or in collections, being obviously very secretive in habits, making it a joy to breed out 'scale-perfect' specimens. The males, more than the other *Iolaus*, are fatally attracted to anything blue so a blue hat or shirt will ensure that the wearer will be 'attacked' if *australis* is about. The late Vic Baker had a net of bright blue material which attracted most *Iolaus* males on the hill tops but drove *australis* into a hovering frenzy, completely destroying any survival instincts they may have had!

I would be most interested to hear the views of collectors who have had the opportunity of studying this species in earlier years.

## **Report on the Ruimsig Reserve for the season October to December 1985**

G.A. Henning

Members of the Lepidopterists' Society of Southern Africa visited the Reserve five times during the months October to December 1985. This being the prime flying time for *Aloeides dentatis*, specimens were recorded on every occasion and the colonies seem to be in good condition. The foodplant, *Hermannia depressa*, has spread onto the areas dug up under the electrical posts and this area seems to be recovering well. The disturbed area on the hill-side has not shown the same recovery rate and is still relatively barren. The presence of lights were noted on these electrical posts. These lights, should they be used will disrupt the normal cycle of the habitat and should preferably be removed or disconnected.

A number of species were recorded during the season and a list will be provided. A new species record for the Witwatersrand was recorded in late December 1985 when a specimen of *Colotis vesta* was seen in the reserve. Ruimsig Reserve has also been chosen as the control site for research on the annual migration which passes over the Witwatersrand every year. Records will be kept of each migration and photos have been taken during this years migration which will be used in future articles to be published on this subject.

The Lepidopterists' Society will continue to monitor the second half of the season and will supply a report.

The Lepidopterists' Society is in the process of trying to obtain funds from various corporations to enable the area to be fenced and to erect an information centre at the reserve.

Management of the reserve is being given considerable attention and we will advise on any steps which need to be taken to ensure the continued existence of the various species in the reserve.

