

Genus *Astictopterus* Felder & Felder, 1860 Dark Rangers

Wiener Entomologische Monatschrift **4**: 401 (394-402).

Type-species: *Astictopterus jama* Felder & Felder, by subsequent designation (Butler, 1870. *Entomologist's Monthly Magazine* **7**: 95 (55-58, 92-99).) [extralimital].

The genus *Astictopterus* belongs to the Family HesperIIDae Latreille, 1809; Subfamily HesperIIDae Latreille, 1809; Tribe Astictopterini, Swinhoe, 1912; Subtribe Astictopterina, Swinhoe, 1912.

Astictopterus (**Dark Rangers**) is a predominantly Afrotropical genus of six species. Four species occur in the Region and there are two extralimital species. Most of the Afrotropical species occur on the eastern side of the continent, with only two species found in West Africa. The sexes are fairly similar. Larsen (2005a) expresses some reservations in regard to whether all the species are congeneric, or whether the Oriental species are congeneric. *Astictopterus inornatus* larvae are recorded feeding on grass (Poaceae), while *Astictopterus stellata* larvae are stated to feed on *Asystasia* (Acanthaceae). This is strong circumstantial evidence that at least these two species are probably not congeneric. However, as noted by Cock & Congdon (2014), the record for *stellata* is probably erroneous, and the species uses Poaceae as larval hosts. *Astictopterus stellata* was recently moved to the newly erected genus *Dotta* (Grishin, 2019).

Astictopterus anomoeus (Plötz, 1879) Yellow Dark Ranger

Apaustus anomoeus Plötz, 1879. *Stettiner Entomologische Zeitung* **40**: 358 (353-364).



Astictopterus anomoeus. Male. Left – upperside; right – underside.
Tano Ofin, Western Ghana. June 2005. RV, SY. ABRI-2019-2341.
Images M.C. Williams courtesy ABRI Collection.



Astictopterus anomoeus. Female. Left – upperside; right – underside.
Tano Ofin, Western Ghana. June 2005. RV, SY. ABRI-2019-2342.
Images M.C. Williams courtesy ABRI Collection.

Type locality: Ghana: “Aburi”.

Distribution: Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo.

Probably recorded in error from Nigeria by Evans, 1937 (Larsen, 2005a).

Specific localities:

Guinea – Nimba area (Larsen, 2005a); Guinea – Ziama (Safian *et al.*, 2020).

Sierra Leone – Loma Mountains (Larsen, 2005a).

Liberia – Monrovia (Larsen, 2005a); Ganta (Larsen, 2005a).

Ghana – Aburi (TL); Kumasi (Larsen, 2005a); Addah (Larsen, 2005a); Atewa Range (Larsen, 2005a).

Habitat: Wetter forests, but only where the canopy is broken enough to allow for the development of grassy areas (Larsen, 2005a).

Habits: The flight pattern is slow and bounding. Both sexes avidly seek flowers (Larsen, 2005a).

Early stages: Nothing published.

Larval food: Nothing published.

Astictopterus bruno (Evans, 1937)

Brown Dark Ranger

Isoeteon bruno Evans, 1937. *A catalogue of the African HesperIIDae indicating the classification and nomenclature adopted in the British Museum*: 79 (212 pp.).



Astictopterus bruno. Male. Left – upperside; right – underside.
Marungu Plateau, Democratic Republic of Congo. NHM Collection, London.
Images courtesy T.B. Larsen.

Type locality: [Democratic Republic of Congo]: “Marungu Plateau”.

Distribution: Democratic Republic of Congo (south-west – Marungu Plateau and Lindi River).

Recorded, incorrectly, from Tanzania by Kielland (1990d), who erroneously believed that the Marungu Plateau is in Tanzania.

Specific localities:

Democratic Republic of Congo – Luluvia River, east of Marungu (TL; Evans, *vide* Kielland, 1990d);

West Marungu (Evans, *vide* Kielland, 1990d); Lindi River (Evans, *vide* Kielland, 1990d).

Habitat: Open montane grassland (Kielland, 1990d; Larsen, pers. comm., 2014). Probably endemic to these isolated highlands (T.B. Larsen, pers. comm., 2014).

Early stages: Nothing published.

Larval food: Nothing published.

Notes: Known for a series of about 12 specimens collected in 1922 by T.A. Barns in two localities along rivers in the sub-montane grasslands of the Marungu Plateau in the DRC (Shaba). It has not been recorded subsequently (T.B. Larsen, pers. comm., 2014).

Astictopterus inornatus (Trimen, 1864)#

Modest Dark Ranger



Specimens of the Modest Sylph (*Astictopterus inornatus*) perched on grass blades
Images courtesy Steve Woodhall

Cycloptides inornatus Trimén, 1864. *Transactions of the Entomological Society of London* (3) 2: 179 (175-180).

Cycloptides inornatus Trimén. Trimén, 1866a.

Cycloptides inornatus Trimén, 1864. Trimén & Bowker, 1889.

Isoteinon inornatus Trimén. Swanepoel, 1953a.

Astictopterus inornatus (Trimén, 1864). Dickson & Kroon, 1978.

Astictopterus inornatus (Trimén, 1864). Pringle *et al.*, 1994: 323.



Astictopterus inornatus. Male (Wingspan 27 mm). Left – upperside; right – underside.

Howick, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. 6 February 2004. J. Dobson.

Images M.C. Williams ex Dobson Collection.



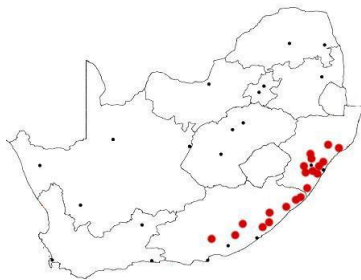
Astictopterus inornatus. Female (Wingspan 28 mm). Left – upperside; right – underside.

Howick, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. 12 February 2006. J. Dobson.

Images M.C. Williams ex Dobson Collection.

Alternative common name: Skaam-walsertjie (Afrikaans).

Type locality: [South Africa]: “Bashee River, Kaffraria”. Holotype (male) in the Natural History Museum, London.



Distribution: South Africa (KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape Province).

Specific localities:

KwaZulu-Natal – Port Shepstone (Swanepoel, 1953); Durban (Swanepoel, 1953); Pinetown (Swanepoel, 1953); Verulam (Swanepoel, 1953); St Lucia Bay (Swanepoel, 1953); Greytown (Swanepoel, 1953); Howick (Swanepoel, 1953); Balgowan (Swanepoel, 1953); Jozini (Mecenero *et al.*, 2013).

Eastern Cape Province – Bashee River (TL); Tsomo River (Swanepoel, 1953); Stutterheim (Swanepoel, 1953); Amabele (Swanepoel, 1953); Kei River (Swanepoel, 1953); Ngqeleni (Swanepoel, 1953); Port St Johns (Swanepoel, 1953); Grahamstown (Mecenero *et al.*, 2013).

Habitat: Coastal and sub-coastal subtropical grassland. Colonies are associated with dense stands of tall “cottonwool grass” (the larval host-plant). These stands are usually in the vicinity of streams or adjacent to mist-belt (Afrotemperate) forest (Pringle *et al.*, 1994).

Habits: The flight is weak and not long sustained, specimens settling frequently, on grass blades or on grass stems. Both sexes may be found feeding from flowers in shorter grass, near stands of cottonwool grass. Males establish territories among the cottonwool grass (Pringle *et al.*, 1994).

Flight period: September to April. The peak emergence appears to be in January (Pringle *et al.*, 1994).

Early stages:

Clark, in Dickson & Kroon, 1978: 192.

Larval food:

Imperata cylindrica (L.) Raeusch. (Poaceae) [Dickson & Kroon, 1978: 192; as *Imperata arundinacea*].

Conservation measures: Because of its very specific habitat requirements this species should be closely monitored (Mecenero *et al.*, 2013).

Astictopterus punctulata (Butler, 1895)

Veined Dark Ranger

Ceratrachia punctulata Butler, 1895. *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London* **1895**: 265 (250-270).



Astictopterus punctulata. Male. Left – upperside; right – underside.

Ikelenge, Zambia. 10 March 2014.

Images M.C. Williams ex Gardiner Collection.



Astictopterus punctulata. Female. Left – upperside; right – underside.
Ikelenge, Zambia. 8 March 2014.
Images M.C. Williams ex Gardiner Collection.

Type locality: [Tanzania]: “Fwambo”.

Distribution: Cameroon, Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia (north).

Recorded, in error, from Nigeria by Kielland (1990) and Ackery *et al.* (1995) (Larsen, 2005a).

Specific localities:

Angola – Huambo Province; Kwanza Sul Province; Malanje Province (Mendes *et al.*, 2013).

Tanzania – Fwambo (TL); Mpanda (Kielland, 1990d); Kigoma (Kielland, 1990d).

Zambia – Ikelenge (Heath *et al.*, 2002); Mwinilunga (Heath *et al.*, 2002); Chingola (Heath *et al.*, 2002); Kitwe (Heath *et al.*, 2002); Kabwe (Heath *et al.*, 2002); Serenje (Heath *et al.*, 2002); Kasama (Heath *et al.*, 2002); Mufulira; Abercorn.

Habitat: *Brachystegia* and *Uapaca* woodlands (Heath *et al.*, 2002). In Tanzania at altitudes from 1 000 to 1 700 m (Kielland, 1990d).

Habits: A common species (Kielland, 1990d). It flies rather weakly amongst grass (Kielland, 1990d).

Flight period: Flies in the wet season in Tanzania (Kielland, 1990d).

Early stages: Nothing published.

Larval food: Nothing published.