

Genus *Melphina* Evans, 1937 Forest Swifts

A catalogue of the African Hesperiidae indicating the classification and nomenclature adopted in the British Museum: 8, 162 (212 pp.).

Type-species: *Parnara melphis* Holland, by original designation.

The genus *Melphina* belongs to the Family HesperIIDae Latreille, 1809; Subfamily HesperIIDae Latreille, 1809; Tribe Astictopterini Swinhoe, 1912; Subtribe Cupithina Grishin, 2023.

Melphina (**Forest Swifts**) is an Afrotropical genus of six species. Most species are scarce, usually being encountered in ones or twos. Primary tropical forests are the usual habitat. Revised by Larsen (2012), who split the genus into three genera by erecting two new genera (*Melphinyet* and *Noctulana*).

Melphina malthina (Hewitson, 1876) White-patch Forest Swift

Hesperia malthina Hewitson, 1876. *Annals and Magazine of Natural History* (4) **18**: 457 (449-457).
Melphina malthina (Hewitson, 1876). Evans, 1937 **comb. nov.**



Melphina malthina. Male. Left – upperside; right – underside.
Ekombe, north-western Democratic Republic of Congo. December 2014. LB. ABRI-2019-2690.
Images M.C. Williams ex ABRI.



Melphina malthina. Female. Left – upperside; right – underside.
Ekombe, north-western Democratic Republic of Congo. December 2014. LB. ABRI-2019-2691.
Images M.C. Williams ex ABRI.

Type locality: Nigeria: “Calabar”. Male holotype in the NHM, London.

Distribution: Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, Gabon, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo.

Specific localities:

Guinea – Ziama (Safian *et al.*, 2020).

Nigeria – Calabar (TL).

Cameroon – Korup (Larsen, 2005a).

Gabon – Nouna (Vande weghe, 2010; as *Melphina* “eala”); Lake Evaro (Vande weghe, 2010); Langoue (Vande weghe, 2010).

Democratic Republic of Congo – Eala (Evans, 1956).

Habitat: Primary rainforest (Larsen, 2005a).

Habits: A rather rare skipper (Larsen, 2005a). Tends to keep to the dense understorey of forest (Larsen, 2005a). Males perch on leaves in thick vegetation (Larsen, 2005a).

Early stages: Nothing published.

Larval food: Nothing published.

euryspila Mabille, 1891 (as sp. of *Pamphila*). *Bulletin de la Société Entomologique de Belgique* **35**: 179 (59-88, 106-121, 168-187). Sierra Leone.

Melphina statira (Mabille, 1891) White-spotted Forest Swift

Pamphila statira Mabille, 1891. *Bulletin de la Société Entomologique de Belgique* **35**: 180 (59-88, 106-121, 168-187).
Melphina statira (Mabille, 1891). Evans, 1937 **comb. nov.**



Melphina statira. Male. Left – upperside; right – underside.
Suhin, Ghana. February 2012. RV. ABRI-2019-2698.
Images M.C. Williams ex ABRI.



Melphina statira. Female. Left – upperside; right – underside.
Malema District, Sierra Leone. January 2011. Safian. ABRI-2019-2699.
Images M.C. Williams ex ABRI.

Type locality: Sierra Leone. Place of deposition of type unknown (Larsen, 2012: 18).

Distribution: Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Nigeria, Gabon.

Specific localities:

Guinea – Ziama (Safian *et al.*, 2020).

Sierra Leone – Guma Valley (Larsen, 2005a); Tiwai Island (Larsen, 2005a).

Liberia – Wologizi (Safian *et al.*, 2020).

Ivory Coast – Abengourou (Larsen, 2005a); Issia (Larsen, 2005a); Tai (Larsen, 2005a); Mount Peko (Larsen, 2005a).

Ghana – Takoradi (Maessen, *vide* Larsen, 2005a).

Nigeria – Oban Hills (Larsen, 2005a).

Gabon – Ogove Valley (Holland, 1894); Nouna (Vande weghe, 2010).

Habitat: Forest, including mature secondary forest (Larsen, 2005a).

Habits: This is a scarce skipper (Larsen, 2005a).

Early stages: Nothing published.

Larval food: Nothing published.

argyroides Holland, 1894 (as sp. of *Parnara*). *Entomological News* 5: 93 (89-95). Gabon: “Valley of the Ogové”. Given as a valid species of *Melphina* by Ackery *et al.*, 1995 but treated as a synonym of *Melphina statira* (Mabille, 1891) by Evans, 1937: 164 and Larsen, 2005a: 535. Type in the Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh.

Melphina melphis (Holland, 1893)

Peculiar Forest Swift

Parnara melphis Holland, 1893. *Entomological News* 5: 31 (26-31).

Melphina melphis (Holland, 1893). Evans, 1937 **comb. nov.**



Melphina melphis. Male. Left – upperside; right – underside.
Ekombe, north-western Democratic Republic of Congo. September 2014. LB. ABRI-2019-2692.
Images M.C. Williams ex ABRI.



Melphina melphis. Female. Left – upperside; right – underside.
Ekombe, north-western Democratic Republic of Congo. November 2014. LB. ABRI-2019-2693.
Images M.C. Williams ex ABRI.

Type locality: Gabon: “Valley of the Ogové”. Place of deposition of the type unknown (Larsen, 2012: 18).

Distribution: Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast, ?Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, Gabon.

Specific localities:

Sierra Leone – Moyamba (Larsen, 2005a); Guma Valley (Larsen, 2005a).

Liberia – Wologizi (Safian *et al.*, 2020).

Ivory Coast – Issia (Larsen, 2005a); Tai (Larsen, 2005a).

Nigeria – Oban Hills (Larsen, 2005a).

Gabon – Ogove Valley (TL); Lake Evaro (Vande weghe, 2010).

Habitat: Forest.

Habits: A very rare species of skipper (Larsen, 2005a).

Early stages: Nothing published.

Larval food: Nothing published.

Melphina hulstaerti Evans, 1956 Congo Forest Swift

Melphina malthina f. *hulstaerti* Evans, 1956 [in part]. *Annals and Magazine of Natural History* (12) **8**: 885 (881-885).

Melphina hulstaerti Evans, 1956 [in part, as female]. Evans, 1956.

Melphina hulstaerti Evans, 1956. Berger, 1974. *Lambillionea* **74**: 67 (66-69). Male ne-allotype designated.



Melphina hulstaerti. Male. Left – upperside; right – underside.

Ekombe, north-western Democratic Republic of Congo. December 2014. LB. ABRI-2019-2695.
Images M.C. Williams ex ABRI.

Type locality: [Democratic Republic of Congo]: “Eanza, Equateur, Congo Belge”. Holotype (female) in MRAC, Tervuren.

Distribution: Democratic Republic of Congo (Equateur, Tshuapa).

Specific localities:

Democratic Republic of Congo – Eanza, Equateur (TL).

Early stages: Nothing published.

Larval food: Nothing published.

hulstaerti Evans, 1956 (as female f. of *Melphina malthina* [In part]). *Annals and Magazine of Natural History* (12) **8**: 885 (881-885). [Democratic Republic of Congo]: “Eanza, Equateur, Congo Belge”.

Melphina evansi Berger, 1974 Equatorial Forest Swift

Melphina evansi Berger, 1974. *Lambillionea* **74**: 69 (66-69).



Melphina evansi. Male. Left – upperside; right – underside.
 Ekombe, north-western Democratic Republic of Congo. December 2014. LB. ABRI-2019-2696.
 Images M.C. Williams ex ABRI.



Melphina evansi. Female. Left – upperside; right – underside.
 Ekombe, north-western Democratic Republic of Congo. December 2014. LB. ABRI-2019-2697.
 Images M.C. Williams ex ABRI.

Type locality: [Democratic Republic of Congo]: “Tshuapa, Bamanya”. Holotype (male) in the MRAC, Tervuren.

Distribution: Democratic Republic of Congo (Equateur, Tshuapa).

Specific localities:

Democratic Republic of Congo – Bamanya, Tshuapa (TL).

Early stages: Nothing published.

Larval food: Nothing published.

hulstaerti Evans, 1956 (as female f. of *Melphina malthina* [In part]). *Annals and Magazine of Natural History* (12) **8**: 885 (881-885).

***Melphina maximiliani* Belcastro & Larsen, 2005**
Banded Forest Swift

Melphina maximiliani Belcastro & Larsen, 2005. *In*: Larsen, 2005. *Butterflies of West Africa*: 559.



Melphina maximiliani. Male. Left – upperside; right – underside.
Tai Forest, Ivory Coast. May 2000. SCC. ABRI-2019-2694.
Images M.C. Williams ex ABRI.

Type locality: Ghana: “Cape Coast, Kissi”. Holotype (male) July, 1996 (T.B. Larsen leg., in African Butterfly Research Institute, Nairobi) – illustrated above.

Dignosis: Similar to *Melphina malthina* but the males differ as follows: smaller; ground colour lighter brown; cell spots on forewing larger and more fully fused; discal band on hindwing upperside fainter; band on hindwing underside narrower and longer (Larsen, 2005a).

Melphina evansi is also similar to *Melphina maximiliani* but is smaller; forewing spots proportionally smaller; the three apical spots in line with each other; band on hindwing underside narrower (Larsen, 2005a).

Melphina maximiliani males differ from those of both *Melphina malthina* and *Melphina evansi* in that the lower part of the antennal apiculus is clearly ringed with white (Larsen, 2005a).

Distribution: Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Ghana.

Specific localities:

Sierra Leone – Bumbuna (C. Belcastro, *vide* Larsen, 2005a).

Ivory Coast – Issia (Larsen, 2005a); Tai National Park (S. Collins); Mount Peko (H. Warren-Gash); Banco (Larsen, 2005a).

Ghana – Kissi, Cape Coast (TL).

Habitat: Forest. May prefer drier forests (Larsen, 2005a).

Habits: This is generally a very scarce butterfly (Larsen, 2005a). At the type locality a number were seen at the edges of a small forest, perching low down on leaves and grasses. They were active from 09:00 to 14:30 (Larsen, 2005a).

Flight period: July and August (Larsen, 2005a).

Early stages: Nothing published.

Larval food: Nothing published.