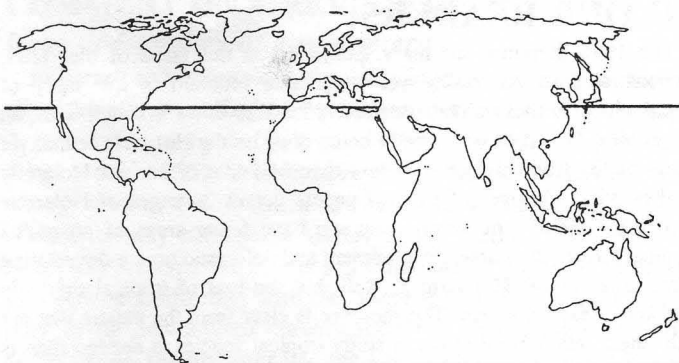




LEPIDOPTERA NEWS

December 1997

No. 4

CONSERVATION OF SEYCHELLES LEPIDOPTERA

To date, 507 Lepidoptera species have been recorded in the Seychelles; these are a mixture of widespread African/Asian species, introductions and a high proportion (55%) of endemic species. Research into species diversity has occurred in short intensive bursts (in 1905, 1908-9, 1955-9 and since 1990). Only in the last two years have attempts been made to evaluate the conservation status of the native species. Many remain virtually unknown with just a few scattered records; however, 51 species have been classified as threatened in the *Seychelles Red Data Book 1997*, 42 of which are Seychelles endemics. Of these, 48% have only been recorded on the island of Silhouette.

Silhouette is the third largest of the granitic Seychelles islands; it is also the second highest. It supports substantial populations of many threatened species and is one of the most important biodiversity hotspots in the Indian Ocean. The Nature Protection Trust of Seychelles established the Silhouette Conservation Project in 1997. This has the long-term aims of restoring the island to its near-natural state. Restoration work will be carried out in partnership with the island's management, the Islands Development Company, which invited the NPTS to establish the project. This is a long-term project and much research work is needed before most restoration projects can be implemented.

One of the research programmes initiated on Silhouette has been a survey of the status of the Lepidoptera. In 1996 and 1997, 15 species were located on Silhouette for the first time, bringing the island's total to 184 species (97% native). Several threatened species were located and some important habitats identified. The most important discovery was made in July 1997 when a major population of the rare indigenous bee hawkmoth *Cephonodes hylas virescens* was found feeding on flowers of the alien shrub *Lantana camara*. During research on this population, a second species was located, *C. tamsi*. This is a large red bee hawkmoth endemic to Seychelles. Prior to the discovery of the Silhouette population, this species was known from a single individual reared from a larva on Mahé island in 1911. Since then, this species has been searched for by many amateurs and professionals; the inevitable conclusion of their failure was that *C. tamsi*

was extinct. It may well be extinct on Mahé, but is now regularly seen on Silhouette. It appears to be much rarer than *C. hylas*, but several individuals can be seen on most days. We are now monitoring the populations of both species, carrying out research into their ecology and searching for further populations. The ecological research is an important first step in ensuring that we can take appropriate measures to ensure the continued survival of this attractive species. Rediscovering 'extinct' species on Silhouette is becoming a commonplace occurrence but it is especially exciting to find a large, brightly coloured species. This is certainly the ideal 'flagship' for Lepidoptera conservation in the Seychelles.

We have two active habitat restoration programmes that should improve conditions for threatened species on Silhouette. One is a localised area of coastal forest near the bee hawkmoth site and the other a major project to restore the Mare aux Cochons marsh. This used to be one of only two high-altitude marshes in the Seychelles until it was partially drained in the 1950s. The area is abandoned and we have just completed survey work prior to reversing the drainage of the site. This will be the largest invertebrate conservation project ever undertaken in the Seychelles as Mare aux Cochons is the only known locality for many endemic invertebrates, including 38% of the threatened endemic Lepidoptera.

The NPTS is a small non-governmental organisation dedicated to the conservation of the natural environment of the region. All our projects are funded by conservation grants or donations from our membership and the general public. The NPTS needs continued support for the Silhouette Conservation Project which offers the best chance of securing the future for the majority of threatened species in the Seychelles.

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1998 ATL Photo Contest: entries due by March 15, 1998. Revised awards: now \$750 in cash prizes!

Photo Contest entries are due each year on the same date, March 15. Also, Grand Prize!

ATL EXPEDITIONS:

1999 – CHILE, January

1999 – VENEZUELA, July: first trip in over a decade to this diverse country!

LEPIDOPTERA NEWS

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CONTENTS for the journals will be issued in 1998.

EXPEDITIONS:

CHILE (Santiago, Concepción, and Lake District) January 1999
VENEZUELA (ATL meeting at Coro, plus other sites): July 1999

TO OUR READERS

The 1996 literature summary, published in this issue of the *News*, demonstrates an interesting yet lamentable problem in the study of Lepidoptera. In these times, we need at least 20 times as much work on the tropical faunas as is currently being done on the Holarctic fauna, yet study of the tropical faunas is less than half that of current Holarctic studies: viz., 10 pages of tropical papers versus 24 pages of Holarctic papers for 1996! And, every year we have fewer areas of unspoiled tropical forest. Of course, development and deforestation are devastating some areas of the Holarctic as well, but the loss of tropical diversity warrants greater concern. The message is clear from the papers that are published: much more effort to study tropical species is needed than is currently being done.

Amateurs in particular have done and continue to contribute much of the life history and biological data for Holarctic species. There are very few amateur Lepidopterists in the tropical countries, however, compared to the Holarctic. Consequently, many fewer field studies are carried out in the tropics. We need more of our northern amateurs to go to tropical areas and do field work. Although from Europe it is more distant to tropical regions than from North America, the effort should be made, especially for those persons who have never been in the tropics.

Some of our members may want to take the opportunity to visit the tropics by attending the planned ATL special meeting in July 1999 in Venezuela, our first meeting outside of the USA. We asked in the questionnaire about occasional meetings in tropical regions: the response generally so far has been somewhat negative, since most members thought they would not have time or could not afford the expenses involved for a long trip. Thus, our regular annual meetings will continue in Gainesville, yet perhaps once every 5 years we could have a special meeting and field trip to a tropical locale. In 1999, the Florida Entomological Society will have their annual meeting in Venezuela: the once-every-5-years non-Florida meeting. Their meeting locale will be the northern city of Coro, between Caracas and Maracaibo. We are trying to organize an ATL meeting/field trip in conjunction with the FES meeting in July 1999, so as to make it easier for us to meet by being a partner with the FES at that time. Our ATL meeting in Venezuela would probably be only one day in Coro, followed by about 10 days visiting natural sites in several areas of northern Venezuela, mainly near Barquisimeto and Mérida. Maracay, where the main insect collection is in Venezuela, would be visited before departing from Caracas. Northern Venezuela offers a variety of habitats, ranging from desert (like around Coro), to high Andean mountains (near Mérida), and tropical rain forest, plus cloud forests and at higher elevations even páramo. Please let us know if you may be interested in attending.

J. B. Heppner
Executive Director

NOTES

- 1998 Annual Meeting:** April 17-19, in Gainesville.
- 1998 Annual Photo Contest:** Do not forget to get your best photos ready for the 1998 ATL Photo Contest! Members are welcome to enter up to 4 photographs (8x10 in) taken in nature in each of three categories: butterflies, moths, and immatures. We now accept photos of temperate or tropical species. Prizes now total \$750 (\$150 first place, \$75 second place, \$25 third place, in each category), plus an added special Grand Prize for the top point winner.
- DUES:** The dues remain the same for members making timely payment (postmarked before the end of December): still \$65 for both journals. Single journal (either *Holarctic Lepidoptera* or *Tropical Lepidoptera*) dues remain at \$40 per year. It is \$75 for both only as the cover price and for members not paying on time. Please help us out by paying on time this autumn!
- ATL Home Page:** internet ATL Home Page was revised as of May 15, 1997. See it at <http://www.troplep.org>.

COMMENT ON A REVIEW OF

Keys to Families of Lepidoptera

Rebuttals to book reviews generally are not warranted or needed, since the reviewer should have his/her opinion based on the facts. A recent review by J. Holloway (1997. *The Entomologist* (London), 116:254-255), however, presents some rather skewed views of my work (1996. *Tropical Lepidoptera*, 4, Suppl. 3), so some comments may perhaps be useful to the reader. The review by Holloway presents two avenues of criticism: 1) imperfect keys, and 2) a lack of conformity with the "current global consensus" (as he puts it) of Lepidoptera classification. To demonstrate less than perfect keys, the reviewer had the Lepidoptera staff at the Natural History Museum, London, make a jolly test of the keys on obscure and unknown taxa that even all the experts there have not been able to place to family. It is not surprising to me that these "unknowns" did not key out as expected, since the keys were of course not designed for unknowns not available for study at the time the keys were written! A better judgement of the keys would result from keying various known species to family and tabulating how many keyed out to the correct family. The additional matter of the Hedyliidae, mentioned in the review, of course involves an anomalous family that is noted in the keys to be an exception among Geometroidea, but since most amateurs would see these moths to be near geometrids in general appearance, it is logical to start them in the Geometroidea key, even if they do not have tympanal organs, as the reviewer notes.

As to the second point of the review, the classification underlying the keys is not unreasonable as the reviewer states. Rather, it is the so-called "global consensus" that is more outside reason, with the current fashion of extreme splitting of families and superfamilies. I call this a "fashion" because every other generation of Lepidopterists either goes on a splitting binge or a lumping binge, all with the same basic data. So, these unnecessary oscillations are more a matter of current fashion than of science, often helping the splitter create new taxa names in the process. The same has happened among some beetle families, like the weevil family (Curculionidae), where some specialists now view this family as about 20 "families," yet all were easily defined as one family 25 years ago! My classification is based on extensive and long-term studies of many characters, both of adult and larval characters, and follows a conservative approach to family-level status for the various groups of Lepidoptera and does not segregate more and more families to their own monobasic superfamilies. Once families are split off to different "superfamilies," or genera are transferred to different "families," the relationships to their nearest relatives become obscure simply because they are in a new category: this isolation is not useful when based on insufficient data. It is better to emphasize similarities, and if necessary, to change the definition and scope of the family or superfamily to accommodate the unusual genus or family in each case, than to immediately split it off (the same is true at the genus level when odd species are encountered).

Let us see where the "global consensus" is in 20 years, perhaps when the splitting trend has given way again to a more reasonable approach to what a family (or superfamily) in Lepidoptera should involve. In the meantime, constructive comments and/or corrections on the keys would be welcome, so they can be improved for future editions.

J. B. HEPPNER

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ASSOCIATION FOR TROPICAL LEPIDOPTERA

HENRY BATES AWARD

In Recognition of Outstanding and Extraordinary
Efforts Toward the Knowledge and Conservation of
Tropical Lepidoptera

Henry Bates (1825-1892) did considerable work on tropical faunas, including butterflies. At age 23, he went to Brazil on a pioneering study of the Amazon basin, staying there for 11 years. Many of his biodiversity studies centered on the butterfly fauna of this region. He was the discoverer and is name-bearer of what we now call Batesian mimicry. He also provided Charles Darwin with butterfly examples of natural selection, helping Darwin in part to formulate his theory of natural selection. Bates himself published his acclaimed summary of his extensive travels in Amazonas (*The Naturalist on the River Amazons*, 1863) and his study of butterfly mimicry (published in 1862), as well as many other scientific papers. Bates is well-known to all and can serve as a good name bearer for this ATL award.

1. Award to be presented at the ATL annual meeting.
2. Award restricted to tropical faunas of Lepidoptera.
3. Award for major biological or biosystematic work that greatly increases our knowledge of any group of tropical Lepidoptera, from any region of the world's tropics (including south temperate regions like Australia, New Zealand, and Patagonia), particularly as this advances conservation efforts for the group or for Lepidoptera in general in the tropics.

JACOB HÜBNER AWARD

In Recognition of Significant Contributions for the
Advancement of the Systematics of Lepidoptera

Jacob Hübner (1761-1826) produced the only works of major biosystematic and scientific significance on the world fauna of both butterflies and moths. His major contributions (some parts published only after his death) include *Sammlung Europäischer Schmetterlinge* (1796-[1838]) (7 vol., 785 plates), *Sammlung Exotischer Schmetterlinge* (1816-[1838]) (3 vol., 438 plates), and *Verzeichniss Bekannter Schmetterlinge* (1816-[1826]) (431 + 72 pages). His taxonomy is among the best for his time period and many of the names he proposed, genus level and higher, as well as numerous species names, are still in use today. Although there are other works of major importance like his, these either do not include species from all regions of the world or else do not include both butterflies and moths. More recent works are either not as comprehensive or are not as important taxonomically. Consequently, it is appropriate to name the ATL systematics award after Hübner, thus not restricting its name to only one region or only to butterflies. Essig (1931) called him "the first great world lepidopterist."

1. Award to be presented at the ATL annual meeting.
2. Award for work on any Lepidoptera family and faunal region of the world.
3. Award restricted to completion of a monograph, or series of major revisions or biodiversity studies, on a group, or groups, of any Lepidoptera, either temperate or tropical. This award is intended to honor life-long achievement.

NEW LITERATURE - 1996

References included herein are from the 1996 primary Lepidoptera literature of books and major journals. The bibliography is divided into sections for the subject matter of the papers cited: General, Personalia, Morphology/Physiology, Holarctic, Neotropical, and Economic papers. The economic section includes only those papers on Lepidoptera pests that may be of more general interest to members. Not listed are about as many papers as are listed herein involving Lepidoptera in such subjects as pest control, molecular biology, silkworm culture, etc., or where a lepidopteran is only used as the subject of various experimental studies. Within the Holarctic and Neotropical sections, the papers (mostly taxonomic) are listed alphabetically by family and author, or under the more general headings of Heterocera, Lepidoptera, and Rhopalocera. Papers are listed once except in rare instances where the subject matter pertains to more than one section or family. Notations are made in square brackets after some citations for the country or countries involved, or the family being discussed, when this is not obvious from the title. Papers listed with English titles, but with text in other languages, have the text language noted in square brackets at the end of that citation. Papers are dated with dates of issue; thus, some citations show a cover date at the end of a citation which is different from the actual date of issue (papers not noting the true issue date in the issue have the correct date in square brackets). J.B.H.

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