

JANUARY 2026

ABN 2026 – 1

(NEWS FROM
NOVEMBER AND
DECEMBER 2025)

AFRICAN BUTTERFLY NEWS



Newsletter
of the
Lepidopterists' Society of Africa



LATEST NEWS

Welcome to January's newsletter!

I wish you all a happy and prosperous 2026, filled with memorable, butterfly-related experiences.

Widespread rain over large parts of South Africa has not – yet – generally resulted in large numbers of butterflies. Nonetheless, there has been plenty of news over the last few weeks.

Please note that there are only two months remaining of the “English common names” review period. Refer to a link elsewhere in this newsletter.

Corrections

Thomas Desloges picked up a few errors, or in some cases, has suggested more probable identifications, in Andrew Noss's Cameroon article in ABN 2025-6. I've attached a link to Thomas's comments below:

[Cameroon – corrections and suggestions](#)

CAB Braai

Martin Lunderstedt is planning a CAB (Centre for Africa Butterflies) open day on 31 January, which will double up as the traditional Lepsoc Africa January get together braai. André Coetzer will present a short talk as well.

Please contact Martin at paulamartin.plg@gmail.com should you wish to attend. A locality pin for CAB is included below:

[CAB Gate](#)

SANParks BUTTERFLY COUNTS

Lynn Katsoulis

Plans are ongoing for a major butterfly monitoring programme, incorporating SANParks. Further news to follow shortly, but a link to a brochure is included below:

[SANParks Butterfly Counts Brochure](#)

Ghana Lepidoptera Workshop

Szabolcs Sáfián

Safi has proposed 6 to 12 November 2026 for the Ghana Lepidoptera Workshop, plus the following week (13 to 20 November) for the subsequent the field trip. The dates have been planned in cognisance with the lunar cycle.

Safi will prepare a detailed itinerary and budget, which will be circulated as soon as possible.

A new locality for *Durbania amakosa flavida*

On 16 December, Steve Woodhall and a few other butterfly enthusiasts discovered a new locality for the Yellowish Amakosa Rocksitter (*Durbania amakosa flavida*). This butterfly is listed as Endangered EN C2a(i).

The new site, Uitkomst, is about 5 km southeast of Cato Ridge and not far from another recently discovered *flavida* locality, Monteseel.



Yellowish Amakosa Rocksitter
Durbania amakosa flavida
Uitkomst, KZN
Steve Woodhall



Uitkomst, KZN
Steve Woodhall



Uitkomst, KZN
Steve Woodhall

LepSoc Africa's Adrian Armstrong of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife recently looked for the butterfly at a known locality at Ngoye Forest Reserve without success.

Taxonomic revisions to *Afrotropical Butterflies*

Thomas Desloges

Thomas Desloges has been busy revising and tidying up the *Afrotropical Butterflies* pages, including the various genera in tribe Acraeini – please have a look at the revised chapters, via the LepSoc Africa or *Metamorphosis* websites.

TELCHINIA

New species

Telchinia gardineri Bernaud, 2024

Provisional English name: Angola Amber

[*Acraea gardineri*](#)

Revisions

Genus removed from the Actinotina subtribe.

Acraea bergeri Gaede, 1915 now clearly treated as a nomen nudum.

Telchinia bonasia alicia Sharpe, 1890

Provisional English name: Eastern Bonasia Amber

Has previously been treated as either a bona sp. or a junior synonym of *bonasia* Fabricius, 1775. Now placed as a subspecies of *bonasia*.

Telchinia bankoides (Collins & Bernaud, 2021)

Corrected the information regarding the types for this species. The authors did not specifically designate a holotype for this species and so their type series are to be regarded as syntypes.

Telchinia kuekenthali (Le Doux, 1922)

Provisional English name: Princely Amber

Now considered a bona sp. following Bernaud, 2023, and not a subspecies of *conradti* Oberthür, 1893. Note the spelling of the name as it has been misspelled as *kuekenthali* in some past publications (including the ATB).

Telchinia polis Pierre 1999 is now a junior synonym of *Telchinia pentapolis* (Ward, 1871).

Meanwhile, the taxon which was previously known under the name *pentapolis* (Ward, 1871) is now correctly called *thelestis* Oberthür, 1893! Please refer to the notes included in the ATB entries for each of these species.

Telchinia burni meyerana Ackery, 1995

Now considered to be a good subspecies, following Bernaud, 2024.

Provisional English name: Western Pale-yellow Amber

BEMATISTES

Revisions

Bematistes epaea (Cramer, [1779])

Corrected synonyms (most have moved to *B. paragea*). *B. timandra* Lucas, 1835 now included as synonym.

Bematistes paragea (Grose-Smith, 1900)

Note the spelling. Has been misspelled as *parageum* in some recent LepSoc publications (including the ATB).

Bematistes dewitzi Staudinger, 1896 has been placed into synonymy with *B. pseudeuryta* Godman & Salvin, 1890 following Pierre & Bernaud, 2025.

Bematistes moforsa Suffert, 1904 replaces *Bematistes macarista* Sharpe, 1906 following Pierre & Bernaud, 2025a.

Despite *macarista* having been used for this taxon since Sharpe, 1906, and despite there being only one subsequent use of the name *moforsa* Suffert, 1904 after its description (where it was considered an aberration of *formosa* by Aurivillius, [1913]), this name change cannot be automatically suppressed because *moforsa* was used as a valid name after 1899. Therefore, following the ICZN, *moforsa* is to be treated as the correct name for this taxon.

Bematistes bana Pierre & Bernaud, 2012 is now a junior synonym of *Bematistes angulata* Suffert, 1904, following Pierre & Bernaud, 2005.

Bematistes latefasciata (Suffert, 1904) has been raised to a full species following Pierre & Bernaud, 2005. *Bematistes rileyi* Le Doux, 1937 is now considered to be a junior synonym.

Bematistes simulator (Ackery, 1995) has been raised to a full species following Pierre & Bernaud, 2005.

Bematistes macaria (Fabricius, 1793)

Added revised ssp. *carpenteri* Le Doux, 1937 following Bernaud, 2024. Previously, it was considered a junior synonym of *umbra* Drury, 1782 but now considered to be a subspecies of *macaria*.

Provisional English name: Western Prominent Wanderer.

TILDIA

Revisions

T. rabbaiae perlucida synonymized with *T. rabbaiae*, while *T. mombasae* is now a bona species. Bernaud *et al.*, 2024 discovered that the type locality for *rabbaiae* (Kenya) is a false locality and that the type specimens are actually from Delagoa Bay [=Maputo, Mozambique]. The result is that *perlucida* is now a junior synonym of *rabbaiae*. They also reinstated *mombasae* as a good species. Therefore, the northern population which was known as *T. rabbaiae rabbaiae* becomes *T. mombasae*, and the southern population which was known as *T. rabbaiae perlucida* becomes *T. rabbaiae* (with no subspecies). A note of explanation has been added in the ATB under the *T. rabbaiae* entry.

STEPHENIA

Revisions

Stephenia equatorialis (Neave, 1904)

Removed duplicate synonym of *salmonea* Le Doux, 1922 (which is now correctly listed only under ssp. *caoncius*).

Note: *salmonea* Le Doux, 1922 becomes a junior secondary homonym if the different Acraeini genre are lumped together (in this case *Stephenia* & *Actinote*). In our present taxonomic understanding, it is treated as a junior synonym of *caoncius* Suffert, 1904.

Stephenia leucopyga (Aurivillius, 1904)

Corrected range and specific localities (it seems there was confusion with *S. intermediodes*).

Stephenia lysi (Pierre, 2006) is now placed in synonymy with *Stephenia liacea* (Suffert, 1904) following Pierre & Bernaud, 2025.

Moved *modesta* Suffert, 1904 from synonymy with *oncaea* Hopffer, 1855 to synonymy with *aglaonice* Westwood, 1881. Also note that Pierre & Bernaud consider female form *leucaspis* Wichgraf, 1914 synonymous with *modesta*.

Stephenia oncaea shimba & *Stephenia oncaea idjwi*

Bernaud & Collins, 2021 did not designate holotypes in their descriptions of these subspecies. The ATB entries have been corrected to reflect that these two taxa have type series (syntypes).

Stephenia buettneri Rogenhofer, 1890 is now *Rubraea buettneri* Rogenhofer, 1890 and is placed in the *cepheus* species group. This is following Bernaud's species groupings and both morphological and genetic evidence. (**comb. nov.**)

RUBRAEA

Revisions

Rubraea cerasa, *unimaculata* & *kraka* have been placed in their own species group, following Bernaud, 2023.

Rubraea bailunduensis (Wichgraf, 1918)

Spelling has been corrected. Note the "u" following the "d" which was missing in previous versions of the ATB.

Rubraea ochracea (Le Doux, 1931)

Removed *ochracea* from synonymy with *Stephenia braesia*. Placed *nohara dondoensis* Stevenson, 1934 in synonymy with *ochracea* following Pierre & Bernaud, 2025.

Rubraea violarum

Acraea nataliensis Angas, 1849 was placed as a junior synonym of *violarum gracilis* (Wichgraf, 1909), when it is correctly a junior synonym of *violarum* Boisduval, 1847 (the nominate subspecies). This has been corrected.

EICHOCHRYSOPS

Revisions

Eicochrysops is now placed in subtribe Celastrina Tutt, 1907. Previously, the ATB had it as *incertae sedis*. The genus was placed in Lycaenopsina Swinhoe, 1910 by Stradomsky, 2016, but according to Zhang *et al.*, 2023 it is a junior syn. of Celastrina.

HARPENDYREUS

Revisions

Harpendyreus is now placed in subtribe Lampidina Tutt, 1907. Previously, the ATB had it as *incertae sedis*. The genus was placed in "Cacyreus section" by Eliot, 1974. Stradomsky, 2016 makes "Cacyreus section" into subtribe Cacyreina. Zhang *et al.*, 2023 merge this subtribe into Lampidina.

LISSIA

Revisions

Lissia laura (Evans, 1937) now raised to a full species following Zhang *et al.*, 2025. Photos & diagnosis have been added.

The distribution & figures for the *Lissia lissa* subspecies have been corrected.

MADAGA

New Genus

Following Zhang *et al.*, 2025, the new genus *Madaga* Grishin, 2025 has been created for *Artitropa hollandi* Oberthür, 1916 & *Artitropa alaoatrana* Oberthür, 1916.

ARTITROPA

Revisions

Artitropa errinys radiata Riley, 1925 was informally considered as a synonym of ssp. *ehlersi* Karsch, 1896 by Larsen, 1991. This position has now been adopted by the ATB.

CUPIDESTHES

New Species

Now included:

Cupidesthes ultramarina Libert & Sáfián, 2025

Provisional English name: Deep-blue Tufted Hairtail

Cupidesthes robusta marginata Sáfián & Libert, 2025

Provisional English name: Western Robust Hairtail

Revisions

Range of *C. robusta* corrected following Libert & Sáfián, 2025.
Species groups now more clearly presented.

EVENA

Revisions

Added photo for *E. angustatum* (2 forms now illustrated). Corrected photo of male of *E. oberthueri* & added photo for female.

Added diagnosis for *E. niji* (to explain differentiation from *angustatum*) and corrected distribution.

The Taxonomic Report

A new paper by Jing Zhang, Nick Grishin and others has been published. "Update to: New Butterfly Taxa and Findings from Genomic Analyses" has been perused by Thomas Desloges, who picked up two taxonomic acts relevant to African butterflies:

- *Lissia laura* (Evans, 1937) has been raised to a full species; it was previously a subspecies of *L. luehderi* (Plötz, 1879).
- A new genus, *Madaga* is created for *Artitropa alaotrana* Oberthür, 1916 and *Artitropa hollandi* Oberthür, 1916.

The *Afrotropical Butterflies* encyclopaedia and ATB checklist have both been updated accordingly.

[The Taxonomic Report](#)

Association for Tropical Lepidoptera

LepSoc Africa member John Douglass is the Secretary of the Association for Tropical Lepidoptera (ATL).

The ATL, in combination with the Southern Lepidopterists' Society (USA), is hosting an annual meeting, to be held at the Cuscowilla Nature and Retreat Centre, south of Gainesville, Florida, on 17-19 April 2026.

Please refer to the registration form via the link below:

[Association for Tropical Lepidoptera](#)

Work continues on the conservation of *Alaena margaritacea*

Etienne Terblanche

The establishment of the conservation servitude for the TL of *Alaena margaritacea* (the Wolkberg Zulu) continues to generate work among the committee members involved. Using André Coetzer's earlier pamphlet as a template, Ingrid van der Merwe designed an exquisite new panel that was printed in the current issue of a local magazine, the *Mountain Getaway*, ready for reading by locals and tourists over the festive season, which coincides with the insect's flight period; Vincent Egan designed a video that shows vegetation changes at the TL based on aerial photographs from 1940s onwards; and Ingrid, Sylvie Kremer-Köhne, and Etienne Terblanche have been visiting the TL and the Boshoff locality looking for the butterfly.

The panel is meant to prompt the public to look for new localities. It gives a synoptic overview of what it would be like to come across it, and what to look out for, including a picture of its actual size. Haenertsburg villagers are in love with this little creature, and they have been a bit bewildered about what it looks like and, not infrequently, an acraeid caused them to think that they had found it. All of this is fine: the butterfly lives in the local population's imagination, and they care for its continued existence, which makes all the conservation difference.

WOLKBERG ZULU BUTTERFLY

2025 MARKS THE CENTENARY OF ITS DISCOVERY

In January 1925, Miss. Margaret Kenway first discovered the Wolkberg Zulu butterfly at a site simply recorded as being 'near Haenertsburg'. After the species' formal description was published by H. Eltringham in 1929, its location and whereabouts became a decade-long mystery. Despite a century passing, the current known population of this elusive butterfly remains confined to only two locations.

BE PART OF THE LOOK-OUT

FAMILY
Lycaenidae

SCIENTIFIC NAME
Alaena margaritacea

CONSERVATION STATUS
Critically Endangered

IDENTIFICATION
A small black and orange butterfly with a wingspan of about -25 mm. Males & females appear similar. Underside light with a black lacework pattern.

FLIGHT PERIOD & HABITS
It flies only in December & January; if seen outside this window, it's not a Wolkberg Zulu. It flies feebly between grass tussocks and often perches for extended periods on grass blades, with closed wings, making them nearly impossible to spot.

HABITAT & DISTRIBUTION
Steep rocky slopes covered in grass tussocks. At altitudes >1600 m a.s.l. within the Haenertsburg area (Wolkberg) of Limpopo.

To reach out please contact Etienne at jetpapermoon@gmail.com



Research on the butterfly has been boosted by the work of Pasi Sihvonen of Helsinki University, Finland, by way of micro-CT scanning of the female abdomen. Hermann Staude kindly connected me with Pasi and facilitated our transport arrangements for meeting at Manoutsa Park below the Strijdom Tunnel. We are very grateful to Pasi and Hermann; more news will follow as it arises.

Praise for a butterfly and a lepidopterist in the popular magazine *Plus 50 Streek/ Region* (Garden Route issue)

Etienne Terblanche

It was a privilege to be invited by Afrikaans nature poet Johann Lodewyk Marais to contribute a brief butterfly-centred article for this popular magazine. Given the regional focus on the Garden Route in this issue, one butterfly jumped to mind: the Brenton Blue, *Orachrysops niobe*. Then an important lepidopterist sprang to mind: Dave Edge. The article is written in my mother tongue, Afrikaans. Here follows an English synopsis. I relate that, for me, stumbling upon a butterfly awakens the same brain circuits as when I meet a person or read a poem or listen to a symphony.

It is a form of freedom, of transgressing the boundaries of one's ego to experience another in their surroundings and in their most profound terms. The article laments the fact that I am unlikely ever to meet the Brenton Blue, because it is gone. It can no longer be encountered. I dwell a bit on the uniqueness of the butterfly's details in appearance and behaviour. The article goes on to praise Dave Edge's enormous work on the little creature, which made possible the observations on its behaviour—so easily listed in the article. Two of Steve Woodhall's stupendous pictures of *O. niobe* adorn the publication, and they are printed on a lovely large scale (thank you, Steve; thank you, Johann).

This is the second such article: a piece about respect for (or re-spect for, looking again at) the Guineafowl, *Hamanumida daedelus*, appeared in the Lowveld edition. I singled it out as a creature that embodies the understated, riveting qualities of the Lowveld.

The magazine is available at chain shops like Woolworths, Spar, and Checkers. They are on sale at R 58.00 each. They can also be ordered online:

<https://www.onthedot.co.za/4me-online-sales>



The magazine cover features a woman with blonde hair, Hélène Truter, smiling. The title 'PLUS 50' is in large pink letters. Below it, 'Streek/Region' is written in a smaller font. The main headline reads 'Hélène Truter'. Other headlines include 'Haven for retired donkeys', 'Willie Strauss kook vir Kersfees', and 'Toast the new year!'. A small inset image shows a butterfly on a flower. The bottom of the cover has a yellow banner that says 'Met Streek/Region in hierdie uitgawe'.



A close-up photograph of a butterfly with brown and orange wings, perched on a white flower. The background is blurred.

Om 'n skoendlapper te ontmoet

FOTO'S STEVE WOODHALL
(www.butterflygaur.co.za)

Mikroskopies gesien, is die verlies aan die skoendlapper aansienlik.

Voeg daarby sy verstomende gewoontes. Omtrent so groot soos 'n rugbyveld was elk van sy broeigebiedes, en ver uit mekaar. Die larwes het geleef van 'n beeldskone veldblom, *Indigofera erecta*. Eers die blare gevreet en dan, met die derde instar, die onderstok onder die grondvlak. Hier het Bayne se suikermier hulle opgepas in rind vir 'n chemiese mengsel wat by in sy heuningklertjies vervaardig.

Summer hier teen die voet waar die larwes voed, kom daar dus heelaltesjies binne heelaltesjies voor. Maar die mens is 'n groot krag op die aarde en ons trek maklik die heelaltesjies skeef. Omdat ons olifante en renosters in die Knysna-omgewing verdryf het, het kersboud en rugie in so 'n mate daar toegeneem dat die *Indigo erecta* versmoor.

ETIENNE TERBLANCHE bring hulde aan die brentonbloutjie, 'n slagoffer van die Tsitsikammabrand van 2017.

In die groot Tsitsikammabrand van 2017, so wil dit voorkom, is die brentonbloutjie (*Orachrysops niobe*) uitgewis. 'n brose lepidopteraan daarmee heen, hoewel die verdwyning van hierdie andersoortige inwoner dalk deur mense se swaarkry oorskadu word.

Maar eens op 'n tyd was daar 'n skoendlapper met 'n skulp-ronde duifgeys buntekant waarin pikswart kolletjies met 'n cenovormige patroontjie perfek ingebed is. Die buntekant was daarenteen melaniendonker met 'n midde-weerlepers verrassing. Dié moos ligbreking is deur minuskule riefies en gaatjies in die vlerkskubbe veroorsaak wat daar soos teels op 'n dak inpas. Die patrone van die riefies en gaatjies was ook cissoortig aan die brentonbloutjie, soos die see se skumborelpatrone op die strand wat nooit presies dieselfde is nie.

20 | Plus 50 Streek/Region • Desember 2023

Gardening for Biodiversity

Charles and Julia Botha

The latest edition of Gardening for Biodiversity (within African Wildlife & Environment magazine) may be viewed via the link below:

[Gardening for Biodiversity](#)

Botanical Education Trust

Charles Botha

The Trustees of the Botanical Education Trust awarded a record amount of R229 620 to nine out of fifteen applications received.

This is funded entirely by income derived from permanently invested donations: your contributions can help to conserve our precious indigenous flora in perpetuity!

[Botanical Education Trust](#)

The importance of museum collections

James van der Heever

James forwarded me the following article, which is relevant to LepSoc Africa's CAB collection.

An international team of scientists involved in a new research project led by London's Natural History Museum, are sorting through the members of a group of blue South American butterflies. Using more than 1 000 samples from collections around the globe, they have discovered nine previously unidentified butterfly species in the *Thereus* genus. The team even extracted DNA from a tiny, 100-year-old butterfly leg.

[New butterflies discovered via museum collections](#)

A north-south hemispheric migratory divide in the butterfly *Vanessa cardui*

Steve Woodhall posted the following article to the LepSoc Africa WhatsApp group. A team of researchers, including LepSoc Africa's Steve Collins and Dino Martins, have published a paper in *nature communications* titled "A north-south hemispheric migratory divide in the butterfly *Vanessa cardui*".

The paper explores the different migratory patterns of *Vanessa cardui* within the Northern and Southern hemispheres.

[Painted Lady migration](#)

Why flying insects gather at artificial light

This research was covered in ABN previously, but here's a link to the full paper, published in *nature communications*.

Explanations of why nocturnal insects fly erratically around fires and lamps have included theories of "lunar navigation" and "escape to the light". The authors of this paper employed high-resolution video to reconstruct the three-dimensional patterns of insect flights around artificial lights. Contrary to the expectation of attraction, insects do not steer directly toward the light. Instead, insects turn their backs toward the light, generating flight bouts perpendicular to the source. Under natural sky light, turning towards the brightest visual hemisphere helps maintain proper flight attitude and control. Near artificial sources, however, this response can produce continuous steering around the light and trap an insect.

[Why flying insects gather at artificial light](#)

Costa Rica's rainforest reborn by butterflies

The BBC covered a positive story about a Costa Rica family who have restored a former cattle pasture to a lush rainforest.

Dozens of butterfly species were reared and released, helping to pollinate plants and kick-start the complex dynamics of a healthy forest. As the vegetation has slowly returned, so too have the birds, frogs, reptiles, monkeys and ocelots that now move through the forest.

[Costa Rica's rainforest reborn by butterflies](#)

The Lost and Found moth

An article has been published in ZooKeys by a team of authors, including LepSoc Africa's Pasi Sihvonen, Axel Hausman and Hermann Staude.

The geometrid moth *Drepanogynis insciata* was known only from two specimens in the Natural History Museum, London, UK. The holotype male collected sometime before 1875 from South Africa, and a second male specimen without a date or locality data but probably collected before 1879.

Very surprisingly, 13 specimens of this species - long considered lost to science - were observed in four different locations between 2020 and 2023 in the Western Cape. These were photographic records on iNaturalist, plus a single male specimen which was collected for study on 28 January 2022.

Phylogenetic analysis places the species within subfamily Ennominae, tribe Drepanogynini. DNA barcodes reveal its nearest genetic neighbour to be *Drepanogynis smaragdaria*, with 5.9% sequence divergence.

[*Drepanogynis insciata*](#)

Butterfly extinctions in Sweden

Thomas Desloges forwarded the following article, published in *Conservation Science and Practice*.

Recent extinctions of protected butterflies, within regions with strong conservation frameworks, raise concerns about biodiversity loss in northwestern Europe. Using historical records, citizen science data and systematic surveys, the authors documented the local extinctions of three butterfly species: *Parnassius mnemosyne argiope*, *Melitaea britomartis*, and *Plebejus argyrognomon* which are high priority conservation targets in Sweden and adjacent countries. *Parnassius mnemosyne* is further protected under the EU Habitats Directive, Swedish national regulations, and the Bern Convention.

While some European butterflies are expanding northward with climate change, these three habitat specialists show range contractions across their distributions. Following the severe drought in 2018, *M. britomartis* was last observed in Sweden that same year, *P. argyrognomon* persisted until 2019, and *P. mnemosyne argiope* until 2023.

Despite Sweden's environmental protection measures, species action plans, and monitoring programs, these extinctions highlight the vulnerability of isolated populations on northern margins to land-use intensification and extreme weather events. Conservation success now hinges on coordinated efforts by universities, environmental authorities, and conservation organizations to not only manage remaining grassland specialists but also restore and reconnect habitat at the landscape scale.

[Butterfly extinctions in Sweden](#)

Monarch Tracking

In the most comprehensive tracking study of monarch butterfly migration ever conducted, a collaboration of over 20 research and conservation organizations across four countries has successfully tracked individual monarchs over thousands of miles. The butterflies were followed from locations throughout North America and the Caribbean to their overwintering sites in Mexico using revolutionary ultralight transmitters and an innovative network that turns millions of everyday devices into wildlife tracking stations.

The results have shattered previous limitations in butterfly tracking, providing scientists with high-resolution, near-real-time data on individual butterflies as they navigate their epic journey south.

[Monarch Tracking](#)

Cosmic Butterfly

James van den Heever of Friends of Verloren Valei, forwarded the following link:

[Cosmic Butterfly](#)

Grassland butterfly index in Europe

Steve Woodhall posted the link below to the LepSoc Africa WhatsApp group.

According to the European Environment Agency, the “index” of 17 grassland butterfly species in the European Union decreased by 50% between 1991 and 2023. The population index is based on a percentage of 1991 counts (taken as 100%), which was presumably already considerably less than historical peaks.

Butterflies play an important role in ecosystems and provide a range of ecosystem services, including pollination. They are sensitive to environmental change and a good indicator of the health of the environment. To ensure the recovery of butterflies, Member States need to significantly increase the implementation of existing policies and put in place new conservation and restoration measures.

[Grassland butterfly index in Europe](#)

Phegea (Jurate De Prins)

The latest edition of *Phegea* (53(4)) has been published. *Phegea* is the journal of the Flemish Entomological Society, and LepSoc Africa's Jurate De Prins is the editor-in-chief. Jurate considers that many LepSoc Africa members will be able to read the journal, as Flemish is very similar to Afrikaans.

[Phegea 53\(4\)](#)

South Africa Species Specialist Group

Dewidine van der Colff of SANBI forwarded Dave Edge the *2024-2025 Report of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and Secretariat*. Please refer to the link below:

[South Africa Species Specialist Group](#)

Riemland Phase 2

Jeremy Dobson

Dave Edge has been involved in a large environmental assessment for the proposed Riemland wind farm project in the Free State. Andrew Mayer and I were involved in the first phase and undertook several butterfly surveys last season. The scope of the project has been extended, and we are scheduled to survey a further nine farms this season.

Jeremy and Andrew undertook their first survey of the extended scheme – a cluster of four adjacent farms about 20 km south of Heilbron – on Wed 05 Nov.

They located two new localities for the endangered Heilbron Indigo Blue (*Orachrysops mijburghi*).



Hillside Russet
Aloeides henningi
Rustfontein, Free State
Jeremy Dobson



African Clouded Yellow
Colias electo electo
Rustfontein, Free State
Jeremy Dobson



African Orange Tip
Colotis evenina evenina
Rustfontein, Free State
Jeremy Dobson



Eastern Sorrel Copper
Lafron clarki
Rustfontein, Free State
Jeremy Dobson



African Meadow White
Pontia helice
Rustfontein, Free State
Jeremy Dobson



Painted Lady
Vanessa cardui
Rustfontein, Free State
Jeremy Dobson

Andrew undertook a further three surveys and located a large colony of *mijburghi* at the farm Jamaica, southwest of Heilbron.



Heilbron Indigo Blue
Orachrysops mijburghi
Jamaica, Free State
Andrew Mayer

Trees and Shrubs of the Waterberg

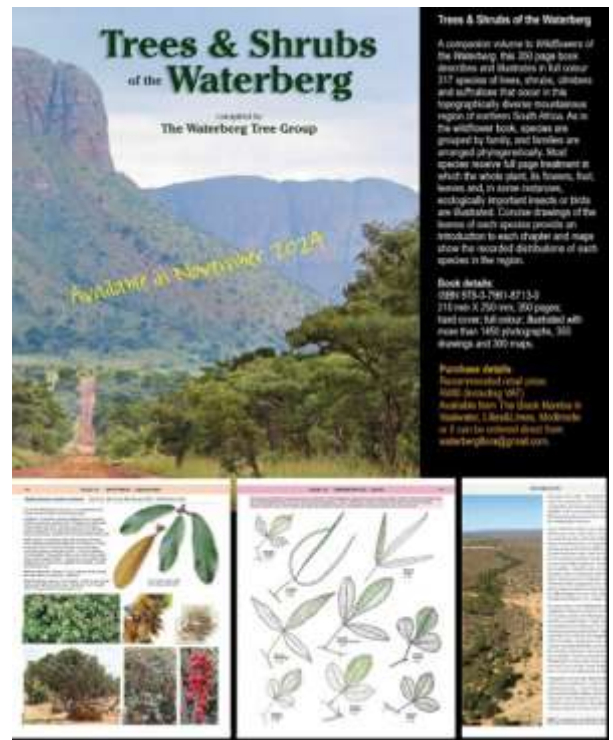
LepSoc Africa members Michèle and Warwick Tarboton have been instrumental in the publication of “Trees & Shrubs of the Waterberg”, a comprehensive illustrated guide of the woody species of this region.

The book is beautifully illustrated, and contains photographs, detailed drawings, distribution maps, and informative text - a must for anyone with an interest in the Waterberg.

The book isn't available in many shops, and it is probably easiest to order directly from Warwick: waterbergflora@gmail.co.za

The cost is R400 per copy, plus an additionally R120 to courier, which represents great value in my opinion.

A PDF of the Waterberg wildflower book is also available from this site.



Emperor Butterflies of the World

Emperor Butterflies of the World, a book by LepSoc Africa member Akio Masui has been published by Pemberly Books.

[Emperor Butterflies of the World](#)

Top new species from 2025

Tildie Williams forwarded me a link to an article, in Mongabay, titled “Photos: Top new species from 2025”.

If you scroll through the list, you will find *Iolaus (lolaphilus) francisi* Gardiner, 2025 (not yet in *Afrotropical Butterflies*), a species described by LepSoc Africa's Alan Gardener and named after fellow LSA member, Jono Francis.

[Top new species from 2025](#)

Verloren Valei

James van den Heever, Secretary of Friends of Verloren Valei, advises that Hannes Marais, Wetland Scientist at MTPA, will lead a field trip on 14 February 2026 (Valentine's Day) to explain how wetlands work, particularly at Verloren Valei.

[Wetlands](#)

Another event coming up is the Wild Orchids Southern Africa conference in Dullstroom on 23 - 25 January 2026. The conference itself will be on 24 January at Dunkeld Estate, with field trips to Long Tom Pass on 23rd and Verloren Valei on 25th. Get all the details at www.wildorchids.co.za or email info@wildorchids.co.za. Not to be missed if you're a plant enthusiast!

Finally, Jeremy Dobson will be hosting a butterfly walk-and-talk at Verloren Valei on Sat 17 January 2026.

[Butterflies at Verloren Valei](#)

James van den Heever
Mobile 083 326 4493
Web www.verlorenvalei.org.za
Email info@verlorenvalei.org.za

The Wetlander

The latest edition of "The Wetlander" – Friends of Verloren Valei's newsletter – may be viewed via the link below:

[The Wetlander](#)

De Berg

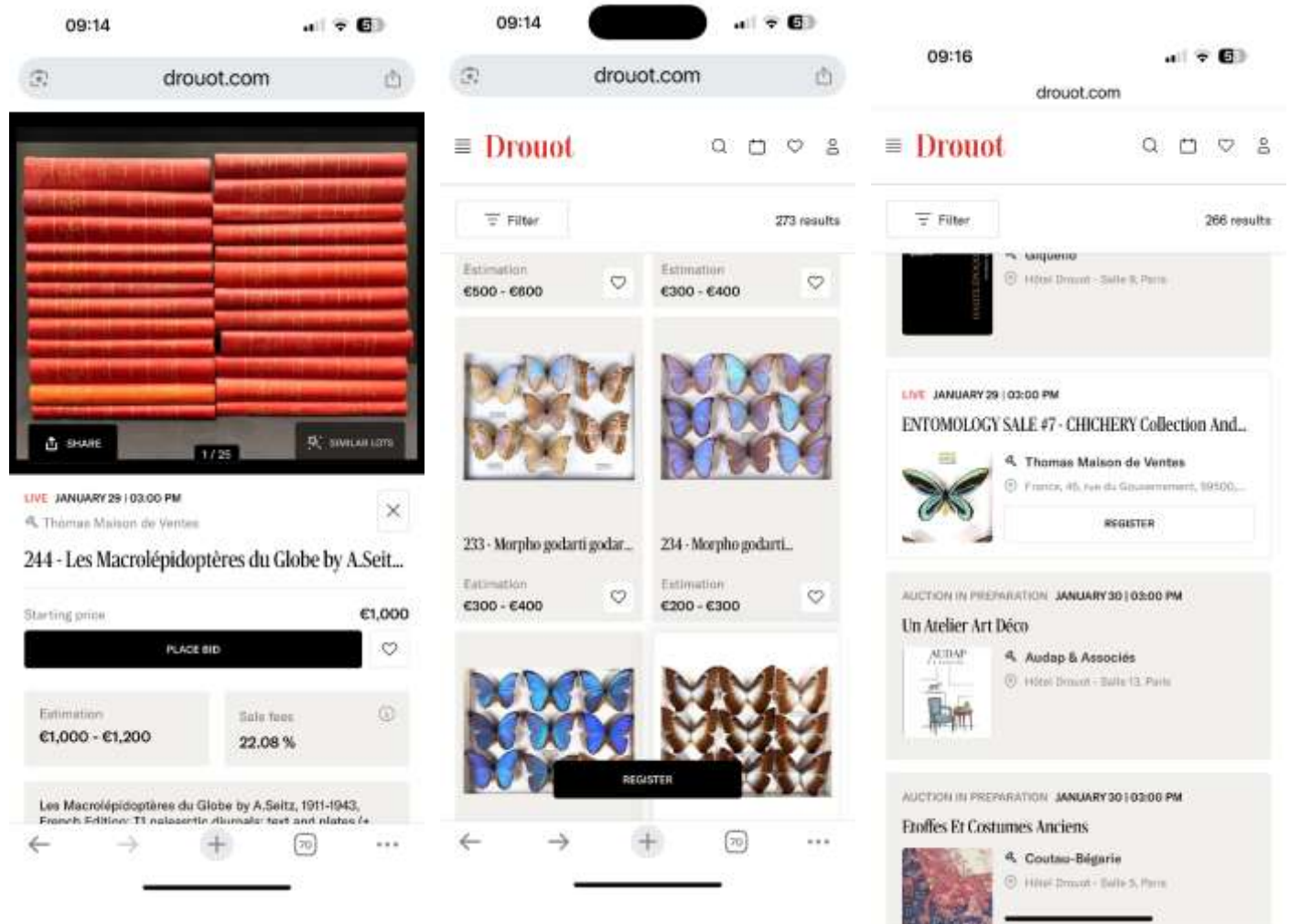
Friends of Verloren Valei are organizing their first ever field trip to De Berg – not to be missed!

The event will be on 21 February 2026 and will be hosted by Steve Vincent; refer to the link below for details and registration:

[De Berg](#)

Auction of an entomological collection, France

Marijke de Kock forwarded the following notification, which may be of interest to some of you. A collection of specimens and books (including D'Abrera's *Butterflies of the Afrotropical region*) is being auctioned in France by Thomas Maison de Ventes.



Euteliidae in South Africa and Namibia

Hanna Roland

The family Euteliidae comprises approximately 900 species worldwide¹, divided into two subfamilies and 29 genera. The website afromoths.net lists 178 species, of which 29 occur in South Africa: 27 Euteliinae and two Stictoperinae.²

23 different species have been observed and documented on the website inaturalist.org. For Namibia the count is 6 Euteliinae and 3 Stictoperinae, which are all three relatively new species.³

It is a so-called tropical family, but the best-known of them, *Eutelia adulatrix*, can be found also in Southern Europe.

Most of the Euteliidae-moths show a typical resting position: the wings are held down beside the short and thick abdomen and many times they are folded. Often the stout abdomen is cocked upward and sometimes twisted to the side. All these characteristics call your attention, when you are looking for moths.

When I saw *Eutelia adulatrix* for the first time – it was in 1996 in Namibia – I was completely fascinated by the strange aspect of this moth, together with the interesting pattern of the wing-design. Much later I encountered the larva even twice, that resembles a bit a slug caterpillar and is just green.



Eutelia adulatrix



...on *Searsia ciliata*
Euteliinae
Hanna Roland



... on *Vachellia*

In comparison to these, the caterpillar of *Eutelia catephioides* is very colourful with much yellow - and can also be red – but unfortunately we did not find this one ourselves:

<https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/10811335>

The imago is plain grey with no special attraction, apart from its strong body held in upward position, and two parallel black lines.

Rather similar to this one is another grey species, which is called “*albidisca*” because it shows a distinct white patch on the curled abdomen and a big white patch on both of the wings. The dark grey lines are indistinct, but you can see the red eye-spots.

After these dark specimens we direct the attention to a very vivid and colourful example, where you can really appreciate the size of the stout abdomen: *Eutelia callichroma*.



Eutelia catephioides
Euteliinae
Wolf Roland



Marathyssa albidisca
Euteliinae
Hanna Roland



Eutelia callichroma
Euteliinae
Hanna Roland

There is also another member of this family, *Eutelia subrubens*, which is normally uniquely red with some very distinct black lines and a black cilia. The subterminal line shows a big opening towards the costa; these dark lines can also be faint. We found a light red-brown imago with finer lines in the dry Northern Limpopo-area. Here you can also well distinguish the two small appendices at the end of the abdomen, a feature many Euteliinae show.



Eutelia subrubens
Euteliinae
Hanna Roland



Eutelia subrubens
Euteliinae
Hanna Roland



Eutelia bowkeri
Euteliinae
Hanna Roland

A totally different Euteliid is the attractive and big *Eutelia bowkeri*, which shows a very animated pattern in green, brown and white with white encircled green eye-spots. I found this one in the Zambezi Region, close to the Okavango River.

Eutelia polychorda is a quite variable species. While the sinuous crosslines show the same pattern, the colours vary enormously. This one in the middle is again from Namibia:



Wolf Roland



Eutelia polychorda
Euteliinae
Hanna Roland



Wolf Roland



Wolf Roland



Eutelia polychorda
Euteliinae
Hanna Roland



Hanna Roland

The different colour variations were observed close together in Northern Limpopo, in the same corner of the house, where the light source was.

Overall the two species, *Eutelia subrubens* and *Eutelia polychorda* are looking somewhat alike. *Eutelia polychorda*, however, has a kink in the forewings.

About two kilometers from the house there was a Mopane-tree wood. And there we found hundreds of caterpillars munching on the Mopane-leaves. They also showed a great variation in colors. In the Field Guide¹ it says: "Caterpillars recorded on *Brachystegia*, Mopane (*Colophospermum mopane*) and *Baikaea*. Sometimes found in huge numbers". We therefore conclude that these were the caterpillars of *Eutelia polychorda*.

We add three pictures of Euteliidae from other observers: the colourful species *Caligathus angasii*, and *Colpocheilopteryx operatrix*. We did not find ourselves a member of subfamily Stictoperinae. But there are 50 records of Genera *Lophoptera* and *Odontodes* on inaturalist.org, however no records of Genus *Stenosticta*.



Caligatus angasii
Euteliinae
Steve Woodhall



Colpocheilopteryx operatrix
Euteliinae
Quartus Grobler



Lophoptera litigiosa
Stictopterinae
Quartus Grobler

A really attractive species presented itself, when I was working with moths in Venezuela. I wanted to close the Euteliid-chapter with this beautifully designed moth.



Marathyssa pulcherrimus
Euteliinae
Hanna Roland

Literature

1. Southern African Moths and Caterpillars
H. Staude, M. Picker, C. Griffiths
Pelagic Publishing 2023, p. 400
2. <https://www.afromoths.net>
3. Esperiana Memoir 5 (2010)

Pyraustinae in Southern Africa

Hanna and Wolf Roland

The name Pyraustinae derives from the ancient Greek word Pyr (fire). It refers to the often burning-red colours of the species in this subfamily. A vivid example is *Stenochora lancinalis*, one of the most frequent species of Pyraustinae in South Africa.

Pyraustinae is a subfamily of the Crambidae. It is the sister of Spilomelinae ("Pearls"), which have been separated from Pyraustinae only in 1982¹. The features leading to this separation can't be seen on photos, but only under the microscope. And they seem to be very difficult to detect in some cases. That leads to the fact that up to date some species are found under Pyraustinae in one literature and under Spilomelinae in another one. Even you may find them in Pyralidae. The English name for most Pyraustinae still starts with Pearl.



Stenochora lancinalis
Northern Limpopo
Hanna Roland

We do not collect moths, therefore we totally depend on pictures in the literature and the www. Here we want to present our own observations of Pyraustinae in Southern Africa, adding two from other observers.

Pyraustinae occur worldwide except Antarctica comprising approximately 1 470 species. The website afromoths.net² lists 35 species for South Africa, many of which have never been posted in inaturalist.org³.

Good live pictures can be found in the SA-Field Guide⁴.



Achyra coeletalis
Namibia
Wolf Roland



Achyra nudalis
Waterberg, South Africa
Wolf Roland



Ulopeza conigeralis
Mutare, Zimbabwe
Hanna Roland

Pyraustinae are mostly delicate and long-legged moths, often with long, forward directed palps. They often hold their wings roof-like and show a triangular profile, like we can see here in the two *Achyra*-species: the "Graded Brown Pearl, *Achyra coeletalis*" and the "Orange Naked Pearl", *Achyra nudalis*, as well as in *Ulopeza conigeralis*, the "Orange Cone Pearl"

We classify the next two species shown as "International Moths"⁵. They are found in many continents. Our observation of a member of Section *Pyrausta phoenicealis* was made in Costa Rica. And quite a lot of our Pyraustinae were found in Namibia.



Pyrausta phoenicealis
Costa Rica
Wolf Roland



Maruca vitrata
Namibia
Wolf Roland



Daulia sp.
Cederberg, South Africa
Hanna Roland

The Genus *Daulia* occurs mainly in Asia and North America. There are only 12 observations in iNaturalist from South Africa – all of them specified only to Genus level. For this Genus a lot of research seems to be necessary.

Some of the Pyraustinae-species visually appear to belong to the subfamily Spilomelinae⁶ like the following three examples show.



Isocentris charopalis
Namushasha, Namibia
Hanna Roland



Pagyda salvalis
Farm Niedersachsen, Namibia
Hanna Roland



Pyrausta gummiferalis
Punda Maria, South Africa
Wolf Roland

Accordingly, the Genus *Isocentris* is found under Spilomelinae in afromoths. In the Field Guide this species is named *Hyalobathra filalis*, the “Checkered Orange”.



Lirabotys infuscalis
Soutpansberg, South Africa
Hanna Roland



Lirabotys prolausalis
KZN, South Africa
Suncana Bradley



(to us) unknown species
Namibia
Wolf Roland

The Field Guide shows *Loxostege plumbatalis*, the “Orange Porphyry”, under Pyraustinae, while afromoths lists that species under *Heortia plumbatalis*/Odontiinae.

Loxostege venustalis has an orange Thorax. While *Pyrausta tetraplagalis*, “Diurnal Pearl”, is a rare species, *Pionebathra olesialis* is commonly found.



Loxostege plumbatalis
Cape Town, South Africa
Suretha Dorse



Loxostege venustalis
Magaliesburg, South Africa
Wolf Roland



Pyrausta tetraplagalis
Namibia
Hanna Roland

Somewhat different from the species shown so far are the representatives of the Genus *Euclasta*. Their appearance tends versus Phycitinae. *Euclasta varii* is also an “International Moth”.



Pionebathra olesialis
Zambezi Region, Namibia
Hanna Roland



Euclasta varii
Zambezi Region, Namibia
Hanna Roland



Euclasta wareni
Soutpansberg, South Africa
Hanna Roland

The English name of *Uresiphita gilvata* is **Wandering Sunset**, a beautiful synonym for many Pyraustinae.

We want to include two observations of species, which we think could be members of the Pyraustinae subfamily.



Uresiphita gilvata
Hoedspruit, South Africa
Wolf Roland



To us, unknown species
Soutpansberg, South Africa
Hanna Roland



To us, unknown species
Divundu, Namibia
Wolf Roland

From the four *Anania*-species listed in afromoths only one single observation has been posted in iNaturalist. The following species listed in afromoths.net under Pyraustinae were never posted in inaturalist: *Chobera polygrammodes*, *Circobotys sinisalis*, *Daukia auriplumbea*, *Ecpyrrhorrhoe diatoma*, *Euclasta bacescui*, *Euclasta pauli*, *Lirabotys rufitincta*, *Ostrinia erythalis*, *Pimelephila albivittalis*, *Pyrausta adsocialis*, *Pyrausta bilineaterminalis*, *Pyrausta cinnamomealis*.

Some additional Genera of Pyraustinae with pictures are published in *Metamorphosis* by the Caterpillar Rearing Group (CRG)⁷, e.g. *Arnia nervosalis*, *Herpetogramma morysalis*, *Hodebertia testalis*, *Pyrausta haematidialis* and *Uresiphita polygonalis*.

This short article shows the beauty of this group of moths. From the scientific viewpoint there are heavy workloads to be done to identify pictures of the species and to better understand the systematics of Crambidae.

Literature

1 The phylogenetic systematics of Spilomelinae

R. Maley, J.E. Hayden, C. Neinhuis, B. H. Jordal, M. Nuss
www.senckenberg.de/arthropoid-systematics, May 2019

2 <https://www.afromoths.net/home>

3 <https://www.inaturalist.org/home>

4 Southern African Moths & their Caterpillars

H. Staude, M. Picker, C. Griffiths
Pelagic Publishing 2023

5 International Moths

Hanna and Wolf-Achim Roland
ABN 2021-2

6 Articles on Spilomelinae from us have been published in ABN2023-1, ABN 2023-3, ABN2023-6 and ABN 2024-2

7 Caterpillar Rearing Group Master Lists

Metamorphosis Vol 27 (2016)
and CRG Results Vol 31(3) (2020)

Going, going, Gabon

Jeremy Dobson

Dietmar and Claudia Ley, Chris Dobson and I had signed up as the South African delegation for a Gabon Expedition, arranged by Dr. Antonio Durante of the Museo di Storia Naturale del Salento (MSNS), Calimera, Italy. This was to be the 12th expedition arranged by Antonio and his team, so we had reasonable expectations that everything would work out OK. Privately however, I had nagging doubts, based on my own previous experiences in trying to obtain research permits in Gabon.

Anyway, flights were booked, holidays planned, and then - two days before departure - disaster struck. South African citizens do not require a visa for Gabon, but all other members of the party did: and the online visa application system (that MSNS were managing on behalf of the delegates) wasn't working. This was a huge blow to everyone, including Dietmar (who's on a German passport) and LepSoc Africa members David Agassiz, Knud Larsen and Michael Ochse. Knud had hoped to celebrate his 80th birthday in Gabon with the rest of the team.



Hotel Tropicana; view from the beach
Libreville, Gabon
Chris Dobson

Chris and I decided to go anyway (we had SA passports and had purchased non-refundable plane tickets), but as a further setback, one day before departure, MSNS's research proposal / permit application was rejected! The reasons given for the rejection were as follows:

1. Insufficient engagement of local (Gabonese) representatives in drafting the research proposal.
2. Lack of data sharing agreements between CENAREST (the principal permitting authority), and individual members of the expedition.

The latter point is tenuous at best: all delegates had unconditionally agreed to forward records to MSNS, who in turn, had a formal data sharing agreement with CENAREST. The Gabonese authorities were guaranteed their data. I can't comment on the first item, as we were not party to the research proposal which was lodged by MSNS. Whatever its merits, I'm sure this submission was based on a template that had worked perfectly well for them eleven times previously. Call me cynical, but I was suspicious about the timing of the rejection, coming as it did, one day before the start of the expedition: this left no time for an appeal, or a revised application, and came after months of review, which included a generic "approved in principle" letter. Perhaps the Gabonese authorities simply didn't want us there?



Standing at what was the edge of
Raponda Walker forest five years ago
Jeremy Dobson



Notice board at Raponda Walker
Jeremy Dobson



Bush clearance at Vonmozel
Jeremy Dobson

Chris and I arrived in Libreville on 16 November, and booked in at the Hotel Tropicana, which will be familiar to delegates of previous Gabon expeditions, such as Peter Ward and Raimund Schutte. There was no sign of our car, which I had pre-booked through Avis. None of the contact numbers on the vacant Avis desk at the airport worked, and we would have really struggled without the assistance of Nina Boupoya, a worker at the airport help desk.

Anyway, once finally introduced to our vehicle, Chris and I set out to explore some forests in the Libreville area. I was shocked to see the ongoing destruction of the southern parts of Raponda Walker (formerly Mondah), where it appears a massive, luxury residential estate is being constructed. I don't have details of the development (other than information gleaned from an information board), but it seems to me that a double lane highway currently being constructed through what (is now) the edge of the forest is not a perimeter ring road but a central boulevard: the potential for ongoing destruction of large parts of the least disturbed areas of the forest is mind boggling.

If it wasn't so sad it would be hilarious, but the truth is that a man with a net - or even a camera - is seen as more of a threat than a man with a bulldozer: without permits, we had to be extremely cautious. I approached some officials at the main entrance to Raponda Walker, but having been told that I needed to visit an office in the centre of Libreville to apply for a permit for my camera, I realised that this was a battle I wasn't going to win. Reluctantly, we adopted stealth mode and visited areas within an hour or two of Libreville.



This appears to be the central boulevard to the new development at Raponda Walker. Trees to the right are going to go; trees to the left have gone already.
Jeremy Dobson



Powdered Dusky Dart
Acleros nigrapex
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Giant Friar
Amauris niavius niavius
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Central Forest Glade Nymph
Aterica galene extensa
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Plain Small Dryad
Bebearia lucayensis
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Angled Royal Palm Dryad (m)
Bebearia cocalia katera
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Angled Royal Palm Dryad (f)
Bebearia cocalia katera
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Broad-banded Dryad
Bebearia comus comus
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Broad-banded Dryad (uns)
Bebearia comus comus
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Black-tipped Dryad
Bebearia laetitia
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Electric-glossed Small Dryad
Bebearia tentyris
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Equatorial Wanderer
Bematistes epaea
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Eccentric Bush Brown
Bicyclus albopaga
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Dark Eyed Bush Brown
Bicyclus ignobilis
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Furry Lined Bush Brown
Bicyclus italus
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Vulgar Bush Brown
Bicyclus vulgaris
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Cameroon Common Forest Sylph
Ceratrachia phocion cameroni
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Regal Cream Glider (m)
Cymothoe beckeri beckeri
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Regal Cream Glider (f)
Cymothoe beckeri beckeri
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Banded Virgin
Dapidodigma demeter demeter
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Orange-spotted Dusty
Epitolina dispar
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Common Pearly (m)
Eresiomera isca isca
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Common Pearly (m) (uns)
Eresiomera isca isca
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Common Pearly (f)
Eresiomera isca isca
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Reckless Red-based Forester
Euphaedra temeraria
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Yellow Red-based Forester
Euphaedra justicia
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Yellow Red-based Forester (uns)
Euphaedra justicia
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Yellow-banded Brown Forester
Euphaedra harpalyce spatiosa
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Blue Dimorphic Forester
Euphaedra medon celestis
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Robust Red-based Forester
Euphaedra permixtum permixtum
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Robust Red-based Forester (uns)
Euphaedra permixtum permixtum
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Prominent Pink Forester
Euphaedra hewitsoni hewitsoni
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Prominent Pink Forester (uns)
Euphaedra hewitsoni hewitsoni
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Parallel Streaked Forester (?)
Euphaedra rezia
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Parallel Streaked Forester (f)
Euphaedra rezia
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Parallel Streaked Forester (m)
Euphaedra rezia
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Parallel Streaked Forester (uns)
Euphaedra rezia
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Mimic Orange Forester
Euphaedra ruspina
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Yellow Red-based Forester (m)
Euphaedra justicia
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Yellow Red-based Forester (m) (uns)
Euphaedra justicia
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Black Gloom Nymph
Euriphene abasa
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Deep Blue Nymph
Euriphene barombina
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Bright Lightning Nymph
Euriphene mundula
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Deep Blue Nymph (m)
Euriphene barombina
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Deep Blue Nymph (f)
Euriphene barombina
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Deep Blue Nymph (f) (uns)
Euriphene barombina
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Black-tipped Dryad
Bebearia laetitia
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Eastern Black-bounded Nymph (uns)
Euriphene gambiae gabonica
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Common Pathfinder
Evena crithea
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Geometrid moth
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Veined Lady
Graphium leonidas leonidas
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Central Angular Glider
Harma theobene superna
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Spotted Oblique Skipper
Hypoleucis ophiusa ophiusa
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Black-tipped Blue Diadem
Hypolimnas monteironis monteironis
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Pitted Fairy Hairstreak
Hypolycaena dubia
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Pitted Fairy Hairstreak
Hypolycaena dubia
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Broad-banded Pansy
Junonia terea terea
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Cream Alabaster
Larinopoda lircaea
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Common Dusky
Microperentila adelgitha
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



White-bodied Grass Skipper
Monza cretacea
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Giant Streaked Sailer
Neptis jamesoni
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Light Ginger Blue
Oboronia pseudopunctatus
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Distinct White-spots
Osmodes distincta
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Brilliant Twinboy
Paradeudorix ituri ituri
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Central Dappled Imp
Pentila maculata pardalena
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Splendid Imp
Pentila rotha rotha
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Dark-eyed Blueboy
Pilodeudorix leonina
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Fiery Imitator
Pseudacraea dolomena dolomena
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Green-spotted Imitator
Pseudacraea semire
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



African Clouded Flat
Tagiades flesus
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Alciope Amber
Telchinia alciope
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



White-spotted Tiger Imp
Telipna albofasciata albofasciata
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Pearl-spotted Tiger Imp
Telipna sanguinea sanguinea
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Fiery Small Fox
Teniorhinus ignita
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Parallel On-off
Tetrarhanis ilma ilma
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson

About an hour east of Libreville is Akanda National Park. We didn't get as far as the park entrance (if indeed there is one), but explored some forested areas, which included a wooded hilltop. Bush farming has destroyed most of the trees, but there were several nice butterflies, including Occluded Golden Red-based Forester (*Euphaedra adonina prasina*) and Barred Highflier (*Aphnaeus orcas*). A couple of Angular Goblin (*Aslauga vininga*) were flying at the hilltop.

It frustrates me to see magnificent trees cut down, burnt and left to rot, in order to create space for a sparse cassava plantation, which has a fraction of the commercial value of the forest that it has replaced, and no ecological value.



Glass-bordered Acraea
Acraea quirina quirina
Akanda, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Monk
Amauris tartarea tartarea
Akanda, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Barred Highflier
Aphnaeus orcas
Akanda, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Angled Royal Palm Dryad
Bebearia cocalia katera
Akanda, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Angled Royal Palm Dryad
Bebearia cocalia katera
Akanda, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Silver-sided Bush Brown
Bicyclus evadne
Akanda, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Vulgar Bush Brown
Bicyclus vulgaris
Akanda, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Western Plain Joker
Byblia anvatarra crameri
Akanda, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Intermediate Violet-washed Emperor
Charaxes lucretius intermedius
Akanda, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Giant Policeman
Coeliades iphis iphis
Akanda, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Euphaedra rezia and
Cymothoe beckeri beckeri
Akanda, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Fiery Glider
Cymothoe lucasii lucasii
Akanda, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Eastern Brilliant Nymph
Cynandra opis bernardii
Akanda, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Occluded Golden Red-based Forester
Euphaedra adonina prasina
Akanda, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Prominent Pink Forester
Euphaedra hewitsoni hewitsoni
Akanda, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Congo Eastern Eyelet
Hallelesis asochis congoensis
Akanda, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



White-fringed Oblique Skipper
Hypoleucis dacena
Akanda, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Common Missile
Meza meza
Akanda, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Gabonese Combative Marble
Falcuna synesia gabonensis
Akanda, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Brilliant Twinboy
Paradeudorix ituri ituri
Akanda, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Narrow Trailblazer
Pardaleodes sator
Akanda, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Glossy-spotted Trailblazer
Pardaleodes edipus
Akanda, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Common Ringlet
Ypthima doleta
Akanda, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Common Ringlet
Ypthima doleta
Akanda, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson

Southeast of Libreville is Vonmozel, where we found extensive, but fairly patchy woodland. At first glance it didn't look too bad until I noticed the complete absence of large trees. This was reflected in the butterfly diversity: you can fool some species, but you won't fool members of subfamily Poritiinae. There were some nice butterflies though, such as Violet Tree Nymph (*Sevenia amulia amulia*) and African Palmfly (*Elymnias bammakoo bammakoo*).



Forest Hairtail
Anthene larydas
Vonmozel, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Pale Babul Blue
Azanus mirza
Vonmozel, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Ethereal Bush Brown
Bicyclus moyses
Vonmozel, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



African Palmfly
Elymnias bammakoo bammakoo
Vonmozel, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Brilliant Twinboy
Paradeudorix ituri ituri
Vonmozel, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Elegant Acraea
Rubraea egina egina
Vonmozel, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Violet Tree Nymph
Sevenia amulia amulia
Vonmozel, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Bonasia Amber
Telchinia bonasia bonasia
Vonmozel, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Crowned Chalk Blue
Thermoniphas alberici
Vonmozel, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson

Pointe Idolo, north of Raponda Walker has some nice bush adjoining a mangrove forest, and we found a couple of ant-trees and some nice ant-associated butterflies, some of which I can't identify from Gael Vande weghe's *Butterflies of Gabon*. These could represent new Gabon records, or even new species - sorry for you, CENAREST.

Pointe Idolo is not the easiest place to get to in the wet season. Chris traversing one of many ponds in the road.
Jeremy Dobson





Congolesse Meadow Blue
Cupidopsis cissus extensa
Pointe Idolo, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



White-tipped Ash Blue
Eicochrysops hippocrates
Pointe Idolo, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Dark Tree Buff
Eresina corynetes
Pointe Idolo, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Blue Dimorphic Forester
Euphaedra medon celestis
Pointe Idolo, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Eastern Royal Sapphire
Iolaus eurus vexillarius
Pointe Idolo, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Four-lined Pixie
Liptena subundularis
Pointe Idolo, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Four-lined Pixie
Liptena subundularis
Pointe Idolo, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Morose Banded Sailer
Neptis morosa
Pointe Idolo, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Fashion Commodore
Precis pelarga
Pointe Idolo, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



White-banded Red-eye
Pteroteinon caenira
Pointe Idolo, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Crinkled Sapphire Flash
Stempfferia cercenoides
Pointe Idolo, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Black-rhombus Sapphire Flash
Stempfferia gordonii
Pointe Idolo, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Sooty Grass Blue
Zizeeria knysna knysna
Pointe Idolo, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Kingfishers
Pointe Idolo, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Pelicans
Pointe Idolo, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson

What is Gabon like? Well, among many positive attributes, a quart of Régab beer is 30% cheaper than a 1,5 L bottle of water (not that beer is especially cheap). You can stay at a reasonable hotel, with air-conditioning, for about \$70 a night, and the fish and chips at the Hotel Tropicana are among the best in the world. While there are large numbers of subsistence farmers outside Libreville, the country seems reasonably happy and prosperous, at least by African standards.

We encountered the full might of the Gabonese military one day, with both sides of the main Libreville road lined with soldiers for several kilometres. I was concerned that there was a potential coup (or saddened that this might be show of strength for the benefit of Dear Leader), but it turned out to be a state visit by French President Emmanuel Macron. We were stopped at a couple of police roadblocks - without incident - and experienced the local traffic, which to be fair, is probably better than most other large African cities.



CENAREST

There was some subsequent correspondence between MSNS and CENAREST. While it's in French, I believe the following document provides guidance on the steps to be followed should you wish to undertake scientific research in Gabon.

[CENAREST](#)

Karoo Capers

Jeremy Dobson

Seeing as our Gabon trip was curtailed (refer to the previous article), we decided not to waste Chris's leave, but rather to go on another short expedition. I contacted Ian Waters regarding a possible Zimbabwe visit, but the weather forecast didn't look promising to say the least. In fact, the only region locally that had a reasonable weather forecast was the Oudtshoorn – Calvinia area, so that's where we headed.

Day one (28 November) saw brief stops at Christiana, Warrenton and Hopetown en route to our accommodation that evening: Dellville Country House in Carnarvon. There were several Salvia Mountain Blue (*Harpendyreus notoba*) flying at Christiana, and some interesting forms of Southern Round-winged Orange Tip (*Colotis euippe omphale*) at Warrenton. Not much else to report.



Salvia Mountain Blue
Harpendyreus notoba
Christiana, North West
Jeremy Dobson



Black-striped Hairtail
Anthene amarah amarah
Warrenton, Northern Cape
Jeremy Dobson



Topaz Babul Blue
Azanus jesous
Warrenton, Northern Cape
Jeremy Dobson



Southern Round-winged Orange Tip
Colotis euippe omphale
Warrenton, Northern Cape
Jeremy Dobson



Desert Dotted Pierrot
Tarucus sybaris linearis
Hopetown, Northern Cape
Jeremy Dobson



African Meadow White
Pontia helice
Hopetown, Northern Cape
Jeremy Dobson

The following day we visited Keiskie Road, where – after considerable searching – we found a few Tankwa Nimble Blue (*Lepidochrysops frederikeae*). They were scarce and very difficult to follow. There were a couple of Warrior Silver-spotted Copper (*Argyraspodes argyraspis*) and a handful of Kamieskroon Beaufort Opal (*Chrysoritis stepheni*).

Next stop was the Calvinia “rubbish dump” site, where we'd hoped to find Hantamsberg Skolly (*Thestor calviniae*). No sign of *calviniae* – we were presumably too early in the season – but there were several Large Silver-spotted Copper (*Trimenia argyroplaga argyroplaga*) feeding on flowers nearby.



Warrior Silver-spotted Copper
Argyraspodes argyraspis
Keiskie, Northern Cape
Jeremy Dobson



Tankwa Nimble Blue
Lepidochrysops frederikeae
Keiskie, Northern Cape
Jeremy Dobson



Large Silver-spotted Copper
Trimenia argyroplaga argyroplaga
Calvinia, Northern Cape
Jeremy Dobson

The following day we drove to the top of the Hantamberg, stopping to look for butterflies along the way. A few years ago, Andrew Morton found a few *Thestor* near the top of the pass, which look closest to Roggeberg Skolly (*Thestor pringlei*), but may well represent a new species. We had hoped to get samples for barcoding, but there was no sign of the butterfly, or of a very interesting form of Grassveld Sylph (*Metisella malgacha*) that has been recorded from this area.

Next up was Middelpas, about 50 km southeast of Calvinia. We had high hopes, having found *Lepidochrysops frederikeae* at Keiskie 24 hours previously, but despite extensive searching we found very little. We arrived at Sutherland later that afternoon after a frustrating day.

Sutherland, however, seldom disappoints and we were very pleased to find several Roggeberg Skolly (*Thestor pringlei*), a species which has not yet been barcoded. Other butterflies included Roggeveld Arrowhead (*Phasis pringlei*), Roggeveld Silver-spotted Copper (*Trimenia wykehami*) and Azure Opal (*Chrysoritis azurius*). There were, however, considerably fewer butterflies than on a previous Sutherland visit with Raimund Schutte, on almost exactly the same day, two years earlier.



Veined Russet
Aloeides pierus
Sutherland, Northern Cape
Jeremy Dobson



Azure Opal
Chrysoritis azurius
Sutherland, Northern Cape
Jeremy Dobson



Roggeveld Beaufort Opal
Chrysoritis beaufortia sutherlandensis
Sutherland, Northern Cape
Jeremy Dobson



Roggeberg Skolly
Thestor pringlei
Sutherland, Northern Cape
Jeremy Dobson



Karoo Bronze
Cacyreus dicksoni
Sutherland, Northern Cape
Jeremy Dobson



Roggeveld Arrowhead
Phasis pringlei
Sutherland, Northern Cape
Jeremy Dobson



Roggeveld Silver-spotted Copper
Trimenia wykehami
Sutherland, Northern Cape
Jeremy Dobson



Black-bordered Russet
Aloeides juana
Gamkaberg, Western Cape
Jeremy Dobson



Protea Emperor
Charaxes pelias
Gamkaberg, Western Cape
Jeremy Dobson

We overnighted in Oudtshoorn, and the following day visited Gamkaberg, a spot that had been brilliant two years previously. On this occasion there was almost nothing, so we departed and reached the Swartberg Pass at about lunchtime. There were a few Swartberg Nimble Blue (*Lepidochrysops swartbergensis*) on the hilltops, and a handful of beautiful Summit Opal (*Chrysoritis pyramus pyramus*) at the base of the slopes.



Orange-banded Protea
Capys alpheus alpheus
Swartberg, Western Cape
Jeremy Dobson



Summit Opal
Chrysoritis pyramus pyramus
Swartberg, Western Cape
Jeremy Dobson



Swartberg Nimble Blue
Lepidochrysops swartbergensis
Swartberg, Western Cape
Jeremy Dobson

We spent the night in Aberdeen, and the following morning tried to get to the top of the Camdeboo mountains, a quest that had defeated us several times previously. This time was no exception, although we do now have a couple of useful contacts for our next attempt.

Next stop was Lootsberg Pass, where after numerous previous failures we finally found Compassberg Skolly (*Thestor compassbergae*), another non-barcoded species. There were solitary specimens of Koppie Nimble Blue (*Lepidochrysops ortygia*) and Variable Nimble Blue (*Lepidochrysops variabilis*) near the tower, and a few Burnished Golden Opal (*Chrysoritis chrysaor*) on the slopes. We searched extensively, on both sides of the road, but the *compassbergae* were only at one spot.



Marbled Russet
Aloeides depicta
Lootsberg Pass, Eastern Cape
Jeremy Dobson



Cupreous Ash Blue
Eicochrysops messapus messapus
Lootsberg Pass, Eastern Cape
Jeremy Dobson



Cape Black-eye
Leptomyrina lara
Lootsberg Pass, Eastern Cape
Jeremy Dobson



Compassberg Skolly
Thestor compassbergae
Lootsberg Pass, Eastern Cape
Jeremy Dobson



Variable Nimble Blue
Lepidochrysops variabilis
Lootsberg Pass, Eastern Cape
Jeremy Dobson



Koppie Nimble Blue
Lepidochrysops ortygia
Lootsberg Pass, Eastern Cape
Jeremy Dobson

That afternoon we reached Noupoot, where we found a couple of Amatola Opal (*Chrysoritis amatola*), several Burnished Golden Opal (*Chrysoritis chrysaor chrysaor*) and a solitary King Copper (*Tylopaedia sardonyx sardonyx*).



Amatola Opal
Chrysoritis amatola
Korannaberg, Free State
Jeremy Dobson



Burnished Golden Opal
Chrysoritis chrysaor chrysaor
Korannaberg, Free State
Jeremy Dobson



Geranium Bronze
Cacyreus marshalli
Korannaberg, Free State
Jeremy Dobson

We reached Bloemfontein that evening, where we stayed at Chadré Guesthouse. The following morning, we stopped briefly at Korannaberg for yet another failed attempt at finding Northern Boland Skolly (*Thestor protumnus terblanchei*). We've now searched for *terblanchei* at this locality in December, January, February and March without success.



Maluti Russet
Aloeides maluti
Korannaberg, Free State
Jeremy Dobson



African Clouded Yellow
Colias electo electo
Korannaberg, Free State
Jeremy Dobson



Brown Nimble Blue
Lepidochrysops ketsi ketsi
Korannaberg, Free State
Jeremy Dobson

We drove home without further incident: an expedition of limited success, but nonetheless, a thoroughly enjoyable adventure.

Tackling Thabazimbi

Lourens Erasmus

The final days of November 2025 were dark, gloomy, dreary and extremely rainy so it was high time to escape the gloom and doom of the city and head back into the light and warmth of the wilderness.

What better place to go than Thabazimbi, to visit my friend Scott Richardson and his wife Katerina, two wonderful people whom I had been hoping to visit for a long time.

Scott and I had been talking on Facebook as he himself is a wonderful photographer, excellent fisherman and an all-round fun person. He had invited me to his farm in Thabazimbi before, so I was really grateful that for once everything worked out and that I had an opportunity to go and explore some uncharted territory.

Day 1

29 November 2025

Sheena and I left for Thabazimbi on a wet, cold, and overall miserable day with feelings of man this had better be worth it as Thabazimbi was a three-hour drive and things did not look good at all.

The first 150 km were uneventful, yet that all changed when we drove through Brits and headed to the main road towards Thabazimbi which had numerous of road blocks to further test my patience, I negotiated these like a pro though and decided to entertain Sheena with one of my other talents: changing the words of famous songs and revealing my true feelings through them.

We had a good laugh and eventually we managed to get hold of Scott who said he would meet us near his gate which was amazingly enough close to another awesome spot in Thabazimbi that I visited with Steven Ball in the past.

This spot was absolutely amazing as it had a lot of white wet season form Club Tailed Charaxes which would be a first for Sheena and a very welcome sight for me as these butterflies are very artistic looking creatures and a lot of fun to photograph.



Club-tailed Squire
Polyura zoolina
Thabazimbi, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Orange Pearl-spotted Princess
Eriboea jahlusa rex
Thabazimbi, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Painted Emperor
Charaxes saturnus saturnus
Thabazimbi, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus

We had a blast photographing them and then as we got closer to Scott's place, we found a few mud puddles which would delay our arrival slightly more, yet this time it would be worth it as next up Sheena and I found a very dazed Green Veined Charaxes lying on its side in the middle of the road. At first sight I thought it was dead, yet when we got closer to inspect it, Sheena picked it up and we noticed its wings were still moving by themselves. I thought this was probably a male which was hit by something or someone traveling along the road. What was very odd, was how still he was sitting and how little his proboscis had moved, even when Sheena walked with him and attempted to give him a little water, he still barely moved at all.

Eventually he started to open his wings a bit which was cool as I love the magma-like colours of the inside of his wings, yet somehow, I was more concerned about whether or not this guy was going to survive. Sheena eventually placed him in a nearby tree as we decided to do all we could to help him. Just before we reached the gate, we were treated to one last rarity. A Ragged Skipper sipping minerals with a Citrus Swallowtail. This was the first time I had ever seen them puddle and the first time ever Sheena managed to photograph one, a special occasion for the both of us. She managed to get a very nice, closed wing shot of the Ragged Skipper and that was pretty much our cue to get back to the original mission of getting to Scott's farm in one piece.

I almost drove past the entrance yet managed to drift my way in, something that felt a lot cooler in a Mahindra Scorpion N explorer than what I had ever imagined.

Scott greeted us warmly but warned us that the road would get worse. I wasn't too fazed at first, but it turned out he wasn't joking. The road was pure dirt and mud and although there was some pretty special game such as Sable, Giraffes, Zebras, a huge Nyala bull and a herd of Impala along the way I was way more focused on getting us into the parking lot without rolling my car or getting stuck.

Fortunately I managed to complete that mission without much fuss and finally got to meet his wife Kristyna, an awesome young lady who comes across as reserved until you get her going about something she's interested in such as health care and spiritual energy which I found very interesting and refreshing as everything she spoke about she did with real fire and passion. We talked a bit about the rose farm before heading out to a tree where Scott had seen a handful of charaxes gather around a sap hole earlier in the week and I was hoping this would be the case again. Which it sort of was, we were treated to a Foxy Charaxes, a couple of Green Veined Charaxes and the star of the show: a massive Goliath Beetle.



Bush Scarlet
Axiocerses amanga amanga
Thabazimbi, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



African Green-veined Emperor
Charaxes candiope
Thabazimbi, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Spotted Joker
Byblia ilithyia
Thabazimbi, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Central Yellow Zulu
Alaena amazoula ochroma
Thabazimbi, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Cupreous Hairtail
Anthene princeps
Thabazimbi, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Topaz Babul Blue
Azanus jesous
Thabazimbi, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus

This was really cool as it had been a long time since I had seen them. They are beautiful big black and yellow beetles which are quite powerful too as they are very reluctant to be plucked from trees and have been known to put up a good fight.

I really enjoyed this and it turned out the best was still to come as our next pit stop would be close to a watering hole which was buzzing with life. Here we saw some awesome Pearl Spotted Charaxes that were bouncing along the road, flapping its wings every so often before finally settling down to feed in a less frantic manner allowing us to get some open wing shots which is always special.

We also saw some Bushveld Charaxes, loads of Brown Veined Whites, Topaz Babul Blues, Common Hairtails, Zebra Blues, and a few Common Whites. A decent way to start off the trip. It was getting a bit late, so we decided to head back in and have a braai, which was absolutely lovely. Scott and Kristyna both have very good cooking skills and the food was delicious.

After lunch we headed back to the watering hole and saw much of the same as before, yet this time round we were treated to the most majestic looking Ragged Skippers I had ever seen. Three of them posed with open wings in a row and showed us that brown butterflies can be exquisite butterflies. I was very excited by this as each one had slightly different markings in their hindwings and it was almost as if they were lined up according to brightness, which was really special and again something I had not expected to see at all.



Dusky Black Prince
Eriboea phaeus
Thabazimbi, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



African Green-veined Emperor
Charaxes candiope
Thabazimbi, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Beige Ragged Skipper
Abantis pillaana
Thabazimbi, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus

This is one of the coolest pictures I have ever taken in my opinion and was one of the real highlights of the trip. Next up was a lovely Foxy Charaxes which posed with semi open wings in a tree, some Mountain Sandman, a Green Marbled Sandman and a Smoky Orange Tip. The place was really teeming with life yet I wanted to see more of the farm, so we decided to explore a bit more and have a drive in Scott's old bakkie to a spot where he had seen some Yellow Zulus. I was very impressed with how accurate Scott's memory was as we found the Zulus within a few feet of where he suggested searching. The Yellow Zulus were very cooperative and allowed us to get open and closed wing photos which is always special and Sheena could add another butterfly on her list as she nears the 350 species mark which is really decent for someone who has only been into butterflies for two years.

Kristina's driving skills were really impressive as some of the roads we travelled on were really twisty, muddy and tricky, yet she made everything look easy. The drive across the farm was pretty scenic and filled with life. We found a few more antelope and eventually stopped at a small hilltop for signal. This spot proved to be a good one as well as we found some Fig Tree Blue eggs and a couple of rather exotic spiders. The one looked like something straight out of an animation, it was a jumping spider which had the cutest hairstyle I had ever seen and it was one of those creatures where the more you look at it, the more it stares at you. This was rather fun and lasted a few moments before I was distracted by a larger grey spider on a grey piece of bark.

The sun was setting now, and it was time for some leftovers from the braai and some drinks. It was a fun-filled evening with us exchanging stories about how we got into butterflies and fishing, and they had seen so much of the world yet somehow still decided that they would rather stay in South Africa than in the Czech Republic (which is where Kristina is from) or England. This blew my mind at first yet the more they told us about the current affairs in both countries the more it made sense.

After dinner Scott decided it was time to introduce us to the wonderful world of Moths. Now as a child of the light, this seemed weird as I never thought looking for moths could be fun or exciting, man was I proved wrong. Scott had placed a moth light in one of the workshops and to my surprise this thing attracted thousands of moths. It was unbelievable to me to see how many there actually were and just how beautiful they could be. The star of the show was undoubtedly the Hampson's Salad moth.

A moth with a very weird name yet one that made a bit of sense once one saw it up close and personal. This moth had gorgeous emerald and black markings on its wings and reminded me of the Green Lantern. Some of the other cool moths were the Hawk and Owl moths which also had unbelievably pretty shades of pink in their wings and just stood out for their share size and calm demeanours.



Hampson's Salad
Mittonia hampsoni
Thabazimbi, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



White-spot Sandman
Spialia spio
Thabazimbi, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Green-marbled Sandman
Gomalia elma
Thabazimbi, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus

As we continued our walk Scott showed us that “Night time butterflies” was actually sort of a thing, we found a large roosting bunch of Brown Veined Whites, Veined Arabs, a few Sandman which looked really beautiful against the back drop of the white flower it was sitting on and a couple of Guinea fowls which looked very bewildered by the light of the torches. This was a really fun experience until I got stuck in the mud and had to walk with a wet shoe for quite a while but even that didn't deter me from the fun to be had in walking in the wilderness at night.

Sheena also had a slight scare when she thought she saw a Leopard's eyes fixated on her, Scott and I didn't see anything and concluded that it was probably a genet or a civet if a predator at all. Nothing to worry about.

Other highlights of the walk included some wicked looking centipedes, millipedes, a few spiders, which was a bit of a nightmare for Sheena as she doesn't like spiders much and got stuck in a couple of webs which wasn't to her liking, yet to her credit she soldiered on and found a few more cool looking mantis and stick insects.

After a long and exciting night walk we decided it was time to get some sleep and hopefully find more exciting things the next morning.



Southern Veined Arab
Colotis vesta argillaceus
Thabazimbi, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



White-cloaked Paradise Skipper
Abantis levubu
Thabazimbi, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Southern Scarlet
Axiocerses tjoane tjoane
Thabazimbi, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus

Day 2

1 December 2025

The day started off with a scream as I found a huge spider in the bathroom and did not really expect to find something behind the curtains. I had a good laugh afterwards but woke up Sheena in the process, and we decided to head to the main house where Kristina and Scott were busy preparing some breakfast, just as delicious as the food we had the day before.

We headed down to the ‘watering hole’ area which proved to be very exciting as there were 6 different Charaxes on display all hopping around playfully and occasionally showing glimpses of how beautiful they are with open wings. We found a pristine looking Foxy Charaxes which interested Kristina and she tried to get it to suck some sweat from her hands and to my surprise she was successful after a few minutes of trying. At first the Charaxes just continued to drink around her hand and I doubted it would get onto her fingers, but her patience paid off and it briefly sat on her fingers which is always an exciting feeling.

I was having a go at getting a Demon Charaxes to open its wings, unsuccessfully, when Sheena called me to get some pictures of an open wing Pearl Spotted Charaxes which was also in a great condition and was more cooperative. After a few fun-filled moments of photographing the Pearl Spotted Charaxes the Demon Charaxes nearly landed on my foot as if to say: “My turn.”



Tailed Meadow Blue
Cupidopsis jobates jobates
Thabazimbi, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Pale Spangled Ranger
Dotta callicles
Thabazimbi, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Eastern Dotted Border
Mylothris agathina agathina
Thabazimbi, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus

This was a cool moment on a personal level as I have seen many Demon Charaxes at Lekgalameetse before but usually with closed wings feeding on Baboon dung, so this was special. We had a lot of fun there but the sun was getting really hot so we headed back to the house and had some tea and rusks and chatted about how different life is in England, Czechoslovakia, and South Africa, I was fascinated by how different the cultures were and how they even like artificial roses, something which as a grower I have always found hard to understand.

Yet it was interesting as I discovered there is a fair demand for these types of things in European countries, mindboggling but interesting as there is very little demand for this sort of thing in South Africa.

After chilling under the trees for a bit we went for a wonderful little walk in the forested area of the farm where we came across a beautiful Lebombo Hairtail. This was only the third or fourth one I had ever seen one and for once this butterfly even decided to open its wings, revealing beautiful sheens of brown and purple mixed with undertones of blue. I really wished Ciara and Mikayla were with us to see this stunner as I'm sure they both would have really loved it. As we ventured deeper into the forest, we scared up an Iguana digging a hole and man was that funny. It had a real expression of shock and fear on its face, and it scurried up a tree only to fall off and then crash into some tree stumps below. I hosed myself as I felt sorry for the creature but appreciated the entertainment.

That proved to be the last real highlight of the trip as we headed back and had a quick lunch before packing up and reluctantly leaving the wonderful farm. This was an extremely memorable trip for both me and Sheena and a place we would love to return to soon.

On the way out we stopped on the dirt road again and Sheena found some lovely Bush Scarlets, Eastern Scarlets and a very tame Mountain Sandman to mark the end of a wonderful trip.



Stick-insect
Thabazimbi, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus

Note: some photos used in this article were from a second Thabazimbi trip, by Lourens, in December.

WORLDS APART

Lourens Erasmus

I have spoken about the magic of Mphaphuli and the gorgeous butterflies found at Gundani Hill many times before, yet this year I had an extremely intense longing to go back to two of my favourite locations in South Africa. I asked Riaan if he could join me for a trip to Mphaphuli and Gundani in October and fortunately he could. This was great as many of the other people I asked had to cancel due to LepSoc Conference commitments, a conference I planned to attend, but since I only had one week of leave, I decided to give it a skip and head to Mphaphuli instead.

21 October 2025

Day 1: MOURNING MPHAPHULI, FROM MAGIC TO MAYHEM.

Riaan and I arrived at Mphaphuli around 13:30 and was greeted by a friendly security guard who claimed that whilst we were allowed in the park, cars apparently weren't which I questioned and proceeded to tell her who I was and that I had been there many times before and arranged with the new site manager Mr. Mavasa to do a survey and she let us in.

Once inside we were treated to one of, if not the most magical butterflying moments of my life to date; hundreds of Large Striped Swordtails, puddling in and around the river, it was completely unexpected and a real treat as some sat in trees, some on the rocks by the river bed and others just puddling right next to one of the locals who was washing her laundry.

We were both in awe of these beautiful turquoise butterflies and we spent quite some time taking pictures of these stunning butterflies. Both of us managed to get decent videos of them flying and circling all around the local washing her laundry. We must have spent at least 20 min there and were both super excited to see what we could find next.



Large Striped Swordtail
Graphium antheus
Mphaphuli, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Southern Narrow-banded Malachite
Papilio nireus lyaeus
Mphaphuli, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Chief
Amauris echeria echeria
Mphaphuli, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus

As we walked towards the middle of the reserve where all the beautiful Vervain and Ribbon Bushes used to grow, we were left with a feeling of horror, anger, confusion, and total disbelief. The community had destroyed literally everything, there was not a single ribbon bush in sight which of course used to be one of the main attractions to Mphaphuli as it used to be a very active part of the reserve where one could see various Swallowtails, False Dotted Borders, Cambridge Vagrants, Albatross Whites and Clouded Flats all sipping nectar from these wonderful plants. Yet there would be none of that.

I could not believe my eyes. My previous trip was in April of this year and what was once a magical environment turned into one of mourning. We were both in absolute shock as we hardly saw anything except chopped down trees, people collecting firewood and a total disregard for the mass habitat destruction they were causing. There was a grand total of three shade swallowtails, one Mocker Swallowtail, a handful of Citrus and Green Banded Swallowtails, no Cambridge Whites, no Friars, no Layman, no Albatross Whites and only one Clouded Forester.

I was downright disgusted and depressed as April painted a whole different picture. The amount of Mocker Swallowtails and Green Banded Swallowtails we saw back then was staggering. we could see one every 10m or so along the road leading up to the hilltop, yet this was like looking at a place that had just been bombed. There were hardly any flowers whatsoever throughout the park, which meant far fewer butterflies. In April we saw 8 different species of Acraea's, yet now we only saw Natal Acraea's which makes no sense as they are butterflies that are supposed to fly year-round with some of them being known to peak in October and November.

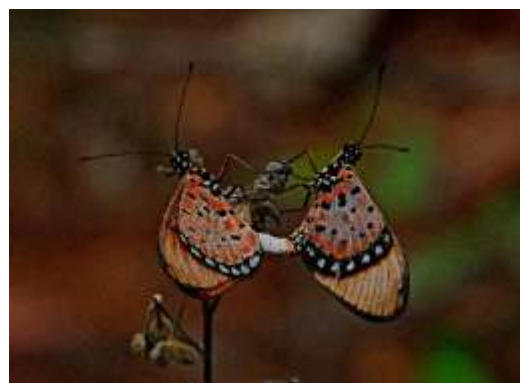
My mind and soul felt tormented how and why was this allowed to happen? I never in my life imagined a beautiful place like this being destroyed by the same community who have always spoken about their butterflies with great pride and joy when finding out what exactly it was that we were doing there.



Broad-bordered Acraea
Tildia anemosa
Mphaphuli, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Azure Hairstreak
Hemiolaus caeculus caeculus
Mphaphuli, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Black-based Acraea
Stephenia natalica
Mphaphuli, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Novice
Amauris ochlea ochlea
Mphaphuli, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Two-pip Policeman
Coeliades pistratus
Mphaphuli, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Yellow-banded Pansy
Junonia elgiva
Mphaphuli, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus

I was super angry and disappointed as I had done a whole presentation of over a 100 butterflies that I've found at Mphaphuli on my previous visits and tried my best to show people just how magical a place they had right on their doorsteps and this was the result of it.

It was like having someone pierce my soul with a sword over and over again, the deeper we went the more trees were left lying on the ground, trees that were probably over 50 years old had been hosting numerous butterflies for generations and were now gone. I just couldn't believe my eyes. We tried to lift our spirits by going to the "pool"/dam area and even this was barren. Our only real sightings were that of blues puddling at the top of the streams, a solitary Grass Yellow and a couple of Bush Browns. Not at all like the trips we had before.

We then proceeded to walk and ponder if it would even be worth going to the hilltop as the clouds started to gather as much as what my anger had been stirred, a storm was brewing on the horizon but the severity of the storm was nothing compared to how awful I felt inside.

Mphaphuli was a sacred spot to me and one I had hoped to show my daughters when they were older, yet in the state I am in now I can but only wonder if there will be anything left to show them in 3-4 years' time. I feel like all I have left are memories of what was once the most magical spot in South Africa and thought so what might have been. We left the park at around 16:00 having recorded a measly 37 species, which is very dismal by Mphaphuli standards.

As we drove home Riaan made a joke saying the next day would be called: Grieving Gundani, and I was like: "No Riaan, speak life, moenie sulke kak kwyd raak nie." Little did I know that he had a point.

22 October 2025

Day 2: GRIEVING GUNDANI.

The following day was supposed to be sunny bright and full of Charaxes, yet life once again proved to think differently.

The day started cloudy and miserable and I was really hoping the clouds and my spirit would be lifted once we arrived but yet again this was the total opposite. What was once the most prominent Hilltopping spot in Limpopo had now been reduced to a glorified dumping site. It was mind blowing how people could allow themselves to live like pigs and not care about their environment.



There were rubbish heaps all over the place, yet we pushed on as I was determined to get something beautiful despite the dump we were in. The morning was extremely quiet until around 11:30 when our first few skippers started to appear. This was a much-needed distraction. The first noteworthy skipper was a Veined Paradise Skipper, which was slightly worn but still magnificent to look at, next up were a couple of Paradise Skippers that chased each other all over the place but finally settled and allowed us to get up close and personal for a few pictures before darting off again.



Clear-spotted Acraea
Stephenia aglaonice
Gundani, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Light Red Acraea
Rubraea nohara nohara
Gundani, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Veined Lady
Graphium leonidas leonidas
Gundani, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Spotted Paradise Skipper
Abantis tettensis
Gundani, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Veined Paradise Skipper
Abantis venosa
Gundani, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Spectacular Paradise Skipper
Abantis paradisea
Gundani, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Glitter Silverline
Cigaritis natalensis
Gundani, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Water Watchman
Parnara monasi
Gundani, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Orange-barred Playboy
Capys diocles
Gundani, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus

The wind was starting to become stronger and stronger and with it blew in a few White Ladies, beautiful black and white butterflies which drifted all over the hills and who simply could not fight the wind. It was a sad moment as I really wanted to get some pictures of these beauties, yet the sadness did not last for too long as we soon found a lovely Veined Swordtail, which was a lifer for Riaan and I am glad to say he managed to get some exquisite pictures. The day moved along slowly from there on out as there weren't too many special butterflies with the most prominent one being the Blue Pansies, our luck started to change a bit as we decided to scout the area behind the towers and that was where we found one of the most beautiful butterflies of the trip.

A fresh Spotted Velvet Skipper which sat perfectly still and even opened its wings fully, a true delight after what had been a meager day up to that point. We took a lot of photos of this magnificent butterfly and then found another pretty cool butterfly nearby, an Orange Barred Playboy who would zoom around some stamvrug trees and then land and briefly open his wings, he did that a few times before finally relaxing and getting used to our presence. Another awesome butterfly to add to our small list of good sightings.

Yet no Charaxes, not even one, which sincerely blew my mind as I had thought there would be plenty of them since it was a bright sunny spring day. A strange phenomenon in my opinion. Things did get a bit better though as when we returned to the original spot, we found a couple of mating Large Striped Swordtails sitting amongst some moss which made for an interesting background. As the day rolled on, we also saw a few Eastern Scarlets, Window Acraea's, Clear Spotted Acraea's and a couple of Natal Acraea's. Overall, we recorded 30 species on the hills, not really what I would call fantastic by any stretch of the imagination but at least we got something.

23 October 2025

Day 3: AT LEAST IT IS SOMETHING.

We decided to give Mphaphuli another shot as my overall feeling about the place just did not sit right with me, and sadly for me things would get even worse as the day wore on but more about that to follow. We arrived at Mphaphuli relatively early on a sunny day and decided to head to the streams to see if we could find some more puddling swordtails. (I'll post the original video of the puddling swordtails in the Facebook group on Saturday 1 November as I have a tradition of only posting on weekends so as to not interfere with work.)

Anyways the puddling was fantastic as there were hundreds of Swordtails yet again, yet alarmingly more people were busy doing their laundry and filling up water from the river than on the Tuesday, a matter which concerns me as I really don't think washing your laundry should be allowed in the reserve as the water can become polluted with foreign objects such as plastic lids, bottles found amongst the clothes (I kid you not) and washing detergents such as Omo or Skip washing powder boxes.

We decided that there were too many people obstructing our views and decided to just cross the stream found near the entrance and explore that side, this proved to be a reasonably good choice as we found Brown, Yellow, Blue and Soldier Pansies puddling nearby. We also saw some Large Striped Swordtails, very worn African Leopards, a few worn Spotted Sailers and a couple of Blotched Leopards.



Large Striped Swordtail
Graphium antheus
Mphaphuli, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Blotched Leopard
Lachnoptera ayresii
Mphaphuli, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Common Evening Brown
Melanitis leda
Mphaphuli, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus

The phrase: "Dis darem iets" would soon become the theme of the trip.

We made our way to the spring/pool area as there seemed to be a few good butterflies flying in the canopies. Our first nice encounter was with a couple of Novices that were flying high in the trees and who eventually settled around eye level for a few open and closed wing pictures, I was surprised at just how peaceful they could be and how much I actually enjoyed seeing them in such a tranquil environment. Next up were a few Layman who were not quite as easy to photograph as they kept on chasing each other and landing in very shady patches of the forest yet looked at peace and as we said to each other earlier: "Dis darem iets."

As we strolled upwards to the spring, we saw more signs of the devastation caused by the ignorance and arrogance of the new management team, there were a few chopped down Sycamore Figs, Water Berries (water bessies), Forest Peach, Stamvrugte, Toad Trees and Flatcrowns.

A truly heartbreaking site, as the community truly doesn't understand the value of these trees to the butterfly population. I was getting very frustrated at this point, and it took some calm flowing streams and a couple of Dancing Jewels and Julia Skimmers (damselfly and dragonflies) to cheer me up.

They painted a pretty picture and were soon followed by some Red Basker Dragonflies and some Violet Dropwings, a few Clouded Flats and a lot of different Amauris species flying in the back ground, presumably Chiefs, Novices and Layman as well as a couple of Blotched Leopards, Emperor Swallowtails, Green Banded Swallowtails and Large Striped Swordtails who were all rather turbo charged but it did not matter as for once Riaan and I just sat down for a moment to take in magical scenes unfolding in front of us. God is an artist as I always say and this was proof of it, tranquility, serenity, and majesty all in one scene.

This feeling was welcomed with open arms. We must have sat there for at least 15 minutes and admired each creature, each plant the calmness of the water gently brushing against the rocks and the few clouds which slowly rolled in.

We eventually got up and decided to try see if we could find something at the Hilltops which we sadly didn't really. The hilltop was super disappointing, in stark contrast to what we found in April when we saw the awesome Buff Tipped Skippers, Red Tab Policeman, One Pip Policeman and a whole lot of Mocker Swallowtails as well as Emperor Swallowtails and Constantine's Swallowtails to name but a few. This time round there were only a few Blue and Brown Pansies and a sole Constantine's Swallowtail so nothing to get super excited about.



Broad-bordered Acraea
Tildia anemosa
Gundani, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Black-based Acraea
Stephenia natalica
Gundani, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Brown Playboy
Capys antalus
Gundani, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus

The original plan of spending the week at Gundani and Mphaphuli went out the window as my frustration, irritation and disappointment reached boiling point when we returned to the entrance and were accused of refusing to sign the register by one of the guards, which was complete and utter nonsense. Riaan and I must have waited for 20 minutes for someone to help us at the gate in the morning yet they were all too lazy to get up and help us so I eventually told him we might as well do it ourselves. We received a very accusing voice note from this "Mr. Mavasa" the new reserve manger in which he claimed that we cannot continue with our relationship since I needed to submit some sort of documents and permits for the information that we were collecting, and we needed to report to the office with these documents on the following visit. I was livid, the arrogance, ignorance, incompetence and utter disregard for decency from this guy drove me over the edge. I used some choice language and told Riaan that this guy could get stuffed. Never in my 6 years of dealing with staff members from Mphaphuli had I been accused of not signing a register or not informing people of what I am doing there, in fact the previous manager Jeffery Rachikombo was more than grateful for all the work I have done and the lists, pdfs and pictures I had shared with him about my previous trips and all the butterflies that I have found in the reserve as he said it would help create awareness amongst the community members and it actually honestly has.

Riaan and I had been stopped a couple of times by some other community members and staff members and when I explained who I was they talked about the work and Facebook posts that I have shared with them, the one guy even told us that the reserve is known for its abundance of butterflies and snakes. Luckily, for I have never encountered snakes, and probably won't ever as I sincerely doubt Mphaphuli would be worth visiting again any time soon under the poor management it is currently under.

We left Mphaphuli with a sense of what used to be, could have been and should have been, I fear Mphaphuli will take a long time to live back up to its former glory.

24 October 2025

Day 4: A DAY TO REMEMBER.

Day 4 saw us heading to Lekgalameetse Provincial Park in hopes of finally finding some form of Blue Charaxes as the original plan was to find some at Mphaphuli and Gundani but that never happened.

This was our all or nothing stop and man was this to be a special day for us.

The day started off with us having some more issues at reception as they booked me into the wrong chalet, but fortunately this was sorted out rather quickly and we even received somewhat of an upgrade at Mkhutsi Camp as the chalet we stayed in was well furnished, had a nice stove, microwave, fridge, working toilet and shower and comfortable queen-sized beds. This is what service should be like, with a smile and with the attitude of if I please the customer/visitor they will return.

We unpacked and headed for the waterfall where we were treated to some mass puddling Green Banded Swallowtails, Common Whites, Dusky Line Blues, Grass Blues, Large Striped Swordtails, a couple of Emperor Swallowtails, African Common Whites, a lone Citrus Swallowtail and some Bush Browns. This was much more like it. We spent a few minutes down there and just enjoyed seeing the many different butterflies take to the mud to get some minerals.



White Lady
Graphium angolanus angolanus
Lekgalameetse, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Dusted Southern Emperor Swallowtail
Papilio ophidicephalus transvaalensis
Lekgalameetse, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Large Striped Swordtail
Graphium antheus
Lekgalameetse, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus

Next up would be a walk up and down the road near the falls in search of some Charaxes, which was reasonably successful, as we saw a Pearl Charaxes and a Green Veined Charaxes head upwards towards the forest, which would be exactly where we were headed. We followed these two up the mountain towards the forest and then found a whole lot more of them near a sap hole where there were at least 6 Charaxes feasting on the tree sap. They were all reasonably well-behaved and unfazed by us, so we got a few nice pictures of them and decided that we needed to head deeper into the forest to look for some Forest Kings. As I walked to the car the magic moment finally happened, 5 years in the making, an open wing male Forest King sitting still for once. I was over the moon but stayed quiet so as not to scare him and made sure to take at least 4 pictures before eventually calling Riaan to witness the moment. The joy and relief I felt was overwhelming, I have seen them so many times yet always posing with closed wings or flying in circles around me, so this was truly the most epic moment butterflying-wise of my life to date. The Charaxes kept on coming and we soon found a few more White Barred Charaxes, Pearl Charaxes and a lot of Silver Barred Charaxes. It was such a special occasion and one we thoroughly enjoyed.

As the light faded, we headed to the cabins with a sense of mission accomplished.

25 October 2025

Day 5: PIESANG (BANANA) POWER

We started the day with a walk behind the cabins towards the rock pools and soon found the Mother of Pearls roosting high up in the treetops which made photography challenging, but with a little help from the camera's flash settings we managed to get some rather ethereal-looking Mother of Pearl photos. I really like the way the flash makes them appear a little bit greener and with a bit more detail than with the normal settings, so this was a nice way to start the day. (I will add a few pictures to show what I mean.)

We stopped a few times to just take in the surroundings and enjoy the birds chattering in the trees and as we approached the first little water hole, we found a gorgeous Emperor Swallowtail sunning itself with open wings. We were again overjoyed at this marvellous sighting, as the ones at Mphaphuli are generally very turbo charged by the time one reaches the reserve. Truly contrasting circumstances, for these butterflies rising early is key as after 8:00 they just float around aimlessly in the treetops, wonderful to look at but very challenging from a photography perspective.



Southern White-barred Emperor
Charaxes brutus natalensis
Lekgalameetse, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Green-veined Emperor
Charaxes candiope
Lekgalameetse, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Drakensberg Silver-barred Emperor
Charaxes druceanus moerens
Lekgalameetse, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Magoebaskloof Forest King
Charaxes xiphares kenwayi
Lekgalameetse, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Common Mother-of-pearl
Protophormora parhassus
Lekgalameetse, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Hyaline Dotted Elfin
Sarangesa motozi
Lekgalameetse, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



African Clouded Flat
Tagiades fesus
Lekgalameetse, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



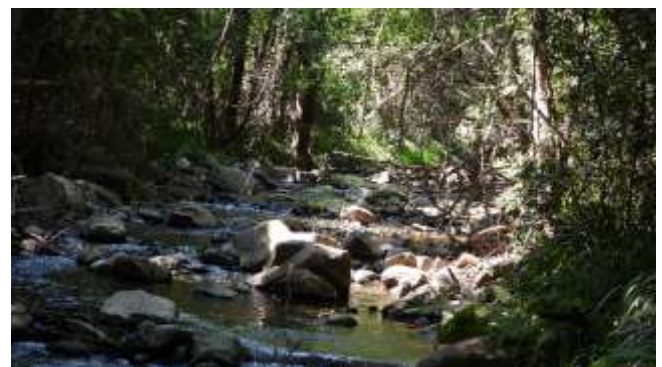
Dusted Southern Emperor Swallowtail
Papilio ophidicephalus transvaalensis
Lekgalameetse, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Common Evening Brown
Melanitis leda
Lekgalameetse, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus

As the morning progressed, we decided to head back up to the Charaxes in the hope of getting some open wing shots of the other species and again we were richly rewarded. I decided to use some banana bait and just smear it on the branches, and this proved to be a Charaxes magnet of note. They were all over it in seconds and again it was like a feeding frenzy in the Kruger National Park with the White Barred Charaxes dominating the bait and scaring off almost all of the others, as soon as any other Charaxes came near them they would engage in battle and just simply force them off the trees, like male lions flicking away hyenas. This started to annoy me a bit as there was a reasonably fresh Forest King Male who desperately wanted to join in on the action and every time he battled with the White Barred Charaxes he was flapping his wings but on the wrong side, it was actually rather comical to watch them and the two of us circling around the sticks, them fighting for supremacy over the banana bait and us fighting to get a good photo.

Eventually I decided to move some of the old bait over and stick on a branch a few meters away, this kind of worked as the White Barred Charaxes took over at the initial spot and left the Forest King to compete with a large female Green Veined Charaxes and a couple of bruised and battered Forest King Females. After about an hour of struggling we both finally managed to get semi decent photos of the male Forest King which seemed to be a different subspecies to the one we originally saw.



Much of the day was spent watching these aggressive butterflies battle for dominance over the bait and time just flew by, before we realized it, it was nearly 16:00 so we decided to give the Charaxes a bit of a break as the light was getting worse by the minute for photography. Down by the river it was much the same as yesterday, but Riaan made an interesting comparison between the Swordtails and the Charaxes: The Swordtails were like one happy family while the Charaxes were like gangsters engaged in a turf war, very contrasting behaviour but fascinating at the same time. From a photography perspective it was also very contrasting as the Swordtails and Swallowtails filled me with a sense of calm and tranquillity while the Charaxes in the forest filled me with feelings of awe, excitement and a certain rushed feeling as they don't pose as nicely as the Swordtails so you really need to live in the moment and be ready for something special. It can be gone in the blink of an eye.

The day concluded with a few Friars dancing through the Forest canopy and then lurking in the shadows for a bit making things a challenge and yet again the words: "Dis darem iets" were uttered.

26 October 2025

Day 6: Time to say goodbye

Day 6 was pretty uneventful; I woke up early as I was keen to get back home to Sheena as it had been a week since I had last seen her and I was also curious to see what state my pool would be in. Much of the morning was spent downloading photos and packing, so nothing too exciting, on the way out we saw a lot of butterflies on the dirt road leading towards the exit but nothing much sat still except for a Clear Spotted Acraea and a Soldier Pansy.

We left Lekgalameetse with a lot of love, fond memories and a lot of "at least it is something" moments. Experiences which were truly worlds apart from the shock, horror and disappointment experienced at Mphaphuli and Gundani.



Southern Friar
Amauris niavius dominicanus
Lekgalameetse, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Eastern Gold-spotted Sylph
Metisella metis paris
Lekgalameetse, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus



Magoebaskloof Forest King
Charaxes xiphares kenwayi
Lekgalameetse, Limpopo
Lourens Erasmus

UPCOMING EVENTS

There will be a year-starting meeting at CAB on Sat 31 January. We will do a bit of work on the collection, before having a braai and catching up with news. Further details to follow shortly.

Jeremy Dobson is hosting a butterfly walk-and-talk at Verloren Valei on Sat 17 January – refer to the following link for further details.

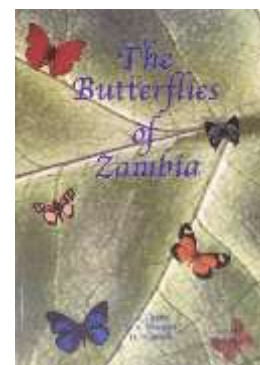
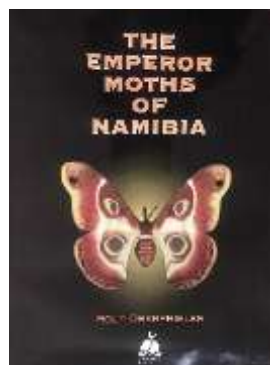
[Verloren Valei – Butterfly field trip](#)

BOOKS

LepSoc Africa Book Stock

LepSoc Africa holds a considerable stock of *Metamorphosis* journals as well as books such as *The Emperor Moths of Namibia* by Rolf Oberprieler and *The Butterflies of Zambia* by A. Heath, M. Newport and D. Hancock. The above books are on sale for R150 and R175 respectively.

Please order using the LSA Website (<http://lepsocafrika.org/>) as follows:



From the Home page, select the **Publications** tab at the top of the page.

Select **Shop** near the top-right of this page.

Select what you wish to purchase from the numerous books and back-issues of *Metamorphosis* contained on this page.

Select the **Cart and Checkout** tab at the top of the page.

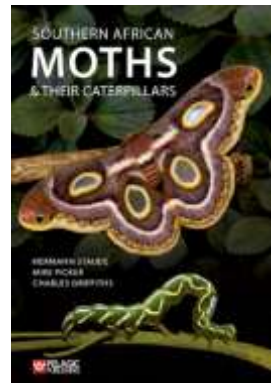
Once you are happy press **Go to Checkout**, select the delivery method that you require and **Place Order!**

Southern African Moths and their Caterpillars (Hermann Staude, Mike Picker and Charles Griffiths)

This is the book that we've all been waiting for: *Southern African Moths and their Caterpillars* is essential reading for anyone with an interest in lepidoptera.

There are more than 10 000 moth species in Southern Africa. This book obviously cannot cover all of them, but it does include most of the moths that you are likely to find and provides examples of the “types” of moth found in this region. You should be able to identify any moth or caterpillar that you find, if not to species level, then at least to genus level.

Brief descriptions and distribution maps are included for all species.



Torben Larsen's The Butterflies of Botswana and their Natural History (Steve Collins, Jeremy Dobson and Mark Williams)

This book has been produced from a manuscript prepared by the late Torben Larsen and is written in Torben's inimitable style. All taxonomic details have been thoroughly updated, and the book includes the latest English names for the 279 species recorded from Botswana. All profits – at least from the first print run – will be donated to LepSoc Africa.

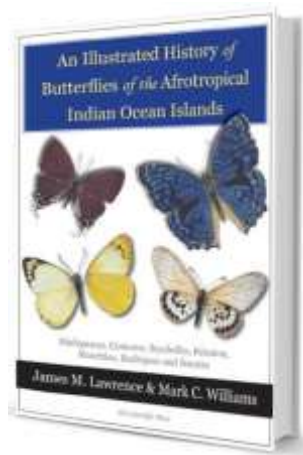
Torben's manuscript was based on his findings over the years that that he lived in Botswana (1989-1992); he had pretty much completed the text in 2006. The manuscript was not illustrated however and there have been numerous taxonomic revisions in the interim period. Like many highly intelligent people, Torben could be very creative when it came to spelling and grammar: knocking this book into shape has been a considerable undertaking and I am very grateful for the assistance of my co-authors, especially Mark who edited the text and helped me with the illustrations. To give the book a clean and elegant look, we have used a mix of set specimens (taken from Afrotropical Butterflies) and “cut-out” images of live butterflies.



Due to demand, we have reprinted additional copies of the books, which may be ordered from me and are on sale for R650 for the regular soft cover or R950 for a hard-cover edition.

Please contact Jeremy Dobson at jchdobson@gmail.com to order your copy.

An Illustrated History of Butterflies of the Afrotropical Indian Ocean Islands (James Lawrence and Mark Williams)



The Indian Ocean Islands off the coast of Africa contain 391 butterfly species, many of which are endemic to the region. This superb book is essential reading for anyone interested in African butterflies!

The book is published by Siri Scientific Press and may be purchased online (in the UK) for £23.99.

Subject to demand (a minimum of ten orders) James Lawrence will import further copies for distribution in South Africa. The final price is subject to postage and import charges but should be about R 600 or a little more.

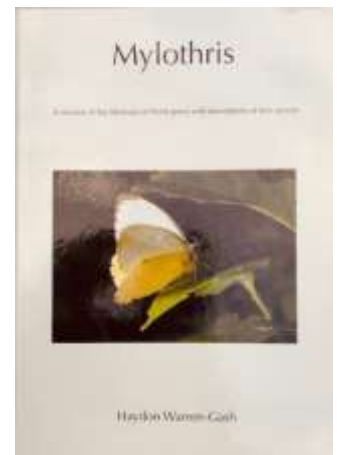
Please contact James Lawrence at phorbanta@gmail.com

***Mylothris* (Haydon Warren-Gash)**

The Dotted Borders have been comprehensively revised. This is an essential book for any serious follower of African butterflies. Mark Williams said that it is a superb publication: clearly conceived and presented, with detailed explanations and motivations for the numerous taxonomic revisions.

The book may be ordered online from NHBS in the UK, although Haydon has very generously discounted the price to R 1 700 for LepSoc Africa members in South Africa, provided there is sufficient demand to justify importing another tranche. I have a single copy available at present.

Please contact me at jchdobson@gmail.com if you want a copy; you can pay me directly in Rand and I'll reimburse Haydon in GBP. I'll deliver to Gauteng residents and will make arrangements with buyers from other areas.

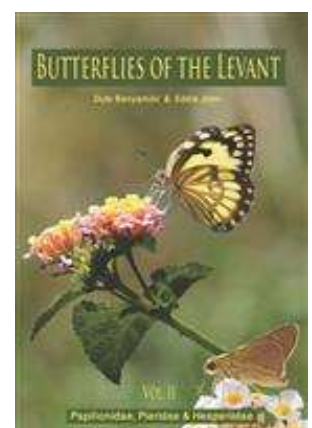


***Butterflies of the Levant: Volume 2* (Dubi Benyamini)**

This is the first in a planned four-volume series, and covers three families: Swallowtails, Whites and Skippers.

In addition to countless photographs, the work has drawn upon resources the world over and includes information regarding the day flying lepidoptera and their biology, not just within the Levant region but over a much wider area.

I have three copies of this book left, so please contact me at jchdobson@gmail.com if you want a copy. The books are on sale for R 1 600.

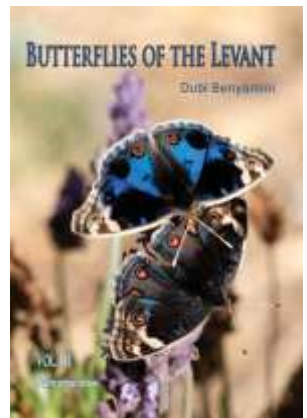


***Butterflies of the Levant: Volume 3* (Dubi Benyamini)**

This is the second book in the series (the volumes are not being published in sequential order) and covers the family Nymphalidae.

As for Volume 2 (above), the work has drawn upon resources the world over and includes information regarding the day flying lepidoptera and their biology, not just within the Levant region but over a much wider area.

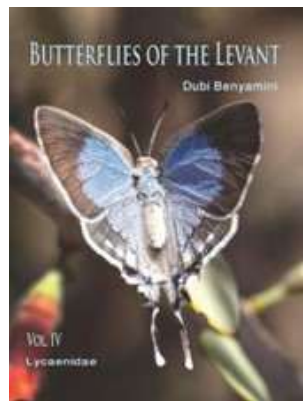
I have two copies of this book for sale at R 2 350. Please contact me at ichdobson@gmail.com if you want a copy.



***Butterflies of the Levant: Volume 4* (Dubi Benyamini)**

A new book by Dubi Benyamini, "Butterflies of the Levant, Vol 4 Lycaenidae" has been published. This is the last book of a four-volume series, although Volume 1 is yet to be completed.

I have three spare copies. They are available for the discounted price of £85 (rand equivalent) plus postage in SA, if required.



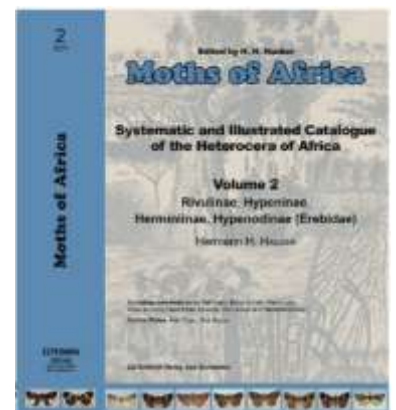
***Moths of Africa – Volume 2* (Hermann Hacker)**

In February 2021 the second volume of the book-series **Moths of Africa** was published. The book is a review of the African Erebidae subfamilies Rivulinae, Hypeninae, Herminiinae and Hypenodinae.

Compiled by Hermann Hacker, the book includes input from LepSoc Africa members Ralf Fiebig, Dirk Stadie and Hermann Staude.

The book may be purchased for € 165.

hermann-heinrich.hacker@t-online.de

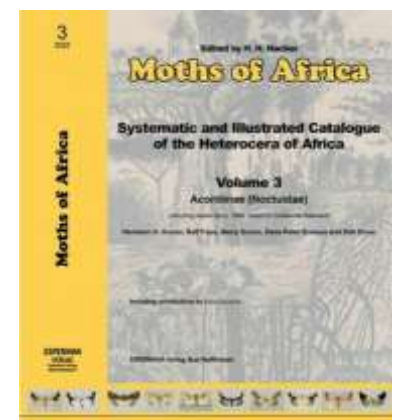


***Moths of Africa – Volume 3* (Hermann Hacker)**

Moths of Africa, Volume 3 (Acontiinae) has been published; the authors are Hermann Hacker, Ralf Fiebig, Barry Goater, Hans-Peter Schreier and Dirk Stadie.

Dirk and Ralf will be familiar to those of you who attended LepSoc Africa's Madagascar Lepidoptera Workshop in April 2018.

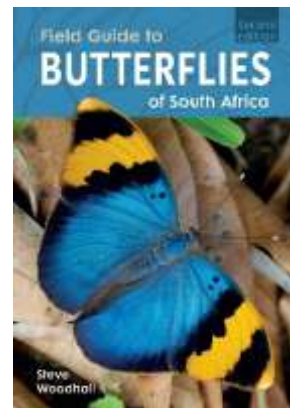
The book is available through NHBS in the UK for £ 275. I'll see if we can import a batch to South Africa in the not-too-distant future.



Field Guide to Butterflies of South Africa (Steve Woodhall)

Fully revised, the new edition of Field Guide to Butterflies of South Africa features all of South Africa's 671 butterfly species. This popular guide includes newly described species and subspecies, and the most recent taxonomic changes based on DNA studies.

[Butterflies of South Africa](#)



Bring Butterflies back to your Garden (Charles and Julia Botha)

Awarded a University of KwaZulu-Natal Book Prize, *Bring Butterflies back to your Garden* highlights the contribution people can make to nature by providing food for caterpillars, instead of trying to eliminate them.

It provides descriptions of over 500 plants, which have been selected by the butterflies themselves!

The book was published by the Botanical Society, and you should find it at most National Botanical Gardens. It may be ordered from the Flora & Fauna Publications Trust info@floratrust.co.za and is on sale for only R150, excluding post and packaging.



Steve Woodhall reviewed the book – his summary can be viewed here:

[Bring Butterflies back to your Garden](#)

COLLECTORS CORNER

David Horne manages “Mad Hornet Entomological Supplies” and carries a range of entomological equipment. David is interested to hear which items are required by collectors and breeders, so that he may procure supplies at reasonable prices and ensure ready availability.

Mad HorneT Entomological Supplies (A product of Horne Technologies CC).

www.madhornet.co.za

ento@hornetechnologies.co.za

+27 76 563 2084



AFROTROPICAL BUTTERFLIES DATABASE

LepSoc Africa have compiled a database, derived from the checklist contained in the *Afrotropical Butterflies* encyclopaedia.

The Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) adopted the *Afrotropical Butterflies* taxonomic list and LepiMAP and iNaturalist have followed suit. The *Afrotropical Butterflies* lists will be a regular feature in ABN, and the latest lists, plus news regarding recent taxonomic revisions, will be included in each edition.

[ATB Checklist](#)

The late Mark Williams prepared a comprehensive list of synonyms, which can be viewed via the following link:

[Synonyms](#)

These will be incorporated into the ATB database, along with fields for countries and SA provinces. Once complete, it will be possible to generate a butterfly-checklist for any African country (or SA province) at the press of a button. To date only South Africa and Botswana have been completed.

[Regional Lists](#)

At around the same time as the “Country” field has been populated, we hope to complete a comprehensive list of English common names (refer to “English Names for African Butterflies” elsewhere in this newsletter). All members of LepSoc Africa can contribute to this work – if you see a relevant taxonomic paper, or spot errors or omissions in the list, please contact me at jchdobson@gmail.com although before you do so, I’d recommend checking the list of synonyms above.

COPYRIGHT & LICENSING

The *Afrotropical Butterflies* database belongs to the Lepidopterists’ Society of Africa. You may use these lists in terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License](#), which allows users to copy, distribute and transmit the work, provided LepSoc Africa is credited.

English names for Afrotropical Butterflies (Jeremy Dobson)

We have completed a review of all 6 593 currently described Afrotropical butterflies and the “provisional” list has been forwarded for comment.

If you see a name that you do not like - or consider that there is a better alternative - please send me your preferred name, along with a brief explanation as to why you believe it's an improvement on the provisional name. This six-month review period ends on 28 February 2026; there are two months remaining and I've received very few suggestions so far!

Anyone may submit suitably motivated alternative names, including people who are not members of LepSoc Africa. In addition to names for species and subspecies, you may submit alternative names for “genera” or for butterfly groups. Should you wish to submit a group name however, it's important that you complete the associated list of butterflies: there may be unintended consequences (Narrow Green Banded Green Banded Swallowtail for example). In addition, if your butterfly is a mimic (or a model for mimicry), you should consider all relevant implications of the change, and supply updated names, as appropriate.

Some of the “rules” that the English names panel has adopted are as follows:

- Eponyms (names based on people's names) are avoided, as this cannot be of benefit in identification.
- Where appropriate, some *species* are named after a country (Uganda Forester for example). In instances where countries are used to differentiate *subspecies*, the nationality is used (Ugandan Coffee Playboy).

All submissions will be recorded and will be checked for duplication with names elsewhere on the list. Should your proposed name already be in use, you will be asked to revise your submission, or to provide a conditional alternative to the existing “provisional” name that has resulted in the clash.

All butterflies for which alternative names have been submitted, will be provided with a counter motivation in support of the “provisional” name. The consolidated list of provisional names and alternatives will be published early in March 2026 and will be subjected to a vote by the members of LepSoc Africa only (the list is the property of LepSoc Africa). This will be followed by a three-month voting period, concluding on 31 May 2026. The “winners” will be chosen on the basis of a simple majority, although in the case of a tie (or in the absence of any votes) the provisional name will be retained.

[English Common Names – Provisional List](#)

Butterfly surveys of South African National Botanical Gardens

We have completed five and a half years of butterfly surveys within our National Botanical Gardens.

Harold Porter (Graham Henning)

Graham visited Harold Porter on 16 November (4 species) and 28 December (5 species, with single observations of each species). Despite widespread rainfall, this December has been a generally poor month for butterflies countrywide.

The total number of butterfly species for Harold Porter stands at 49.

Kirstenbosch (Fanie Rautenbach)

Fanie visited Kirstenbosch on 23 November and recorded 10 species, including two new records for the 2025 – 2026 season: Pea Blue (*Lampides boeticus*) and Eastern Dotted Border (*Mylothris agathina agathina*). Fanie picked up an iNaturalist record for Kirstenbosch of Phoenix Palm Night-fighter (*Zophopetes dysmephila*).

[*Zophopetes dysmephila*](#)

December's visit (26 Dec) produced 12 species, and the first sightings of Geranium Bronze (*Cacyreus marshalli*), Cape Black-eye (*Leptomyrina lara*) and African Plain Tiger (*Danaus chrysippus orientis*) this season.

The Kirstenbosch butterfly checklist currently stands at 39 species.

KwaZulu-Natal Botanical Garden (Unallocated)

As a result of Corrina Naidoo's relocation to Kimberly, we urgently require a volunteer to take on the butterfly monitoring role at KZN. If anyone lives in the Pietermaritzburg area - and is willing to visit the gardens once a month (or as frequently as possible) - please let me know. Chris Dobson visited KZN Botanical Garden in December and recorded a rather meagre 6 species, all common and widespread butterflies.

Lowveld (Christopher Willis)

Christopher visited Lowveld on 23 November and found 35 species, including a new record for Lowveld: Dusky Lineblue (*Pseudonacaduba sichela sichela*). He also recorded the first sighting of Tailed Black-eye (*Leptomyrina hirundo*) at Lowveld this season. A second visit, on 22 December yielded 31 species.

Since the commencement of the National Botanical Gardens butterfly surveys 5,5 years ago, Christopher has added 29 new species to the Lowveld list, which includes 13 new records for all NBGs.

The Lowveld Botanical Gardens butterfly checklist currently stands at 139 species.



Dusky Lineblue
Pseudonacaduba sichela sichela
Lowveld, Mpumalanga
Christopher Willis



Impala Acraea
Stephenia oncaea oncaea
Lowveld, Mpumalanga
Christopher Willis



Impala Acraea
Stephenia oncaea oncaea
Lowveld, Mpumalanga
Christopher Willis



Southern Scarlet
Axiocerses tjoane tjoane
Lowveld, Mpumalanga
Christopher Willis



Southern Round-winged Orange Tip
Colotis euippe omphale
Lowveld, Mpumalanga
Christopher Willis



Common Mother-of-pearl
Protogoniomorpha parhassus
Lowveld, Mpumalanga
Christopher Willis



Tiny Grass Blue
Zizula hylax
Lowveld, Mpumalanga
Christopher Willis

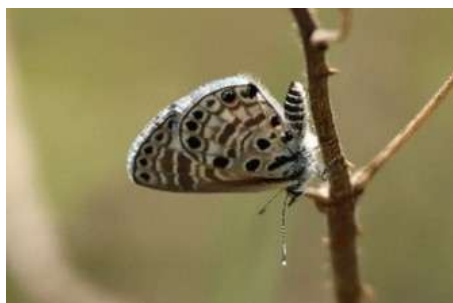
Pretoria (Hennie Vermaak)

Hennie Vermaak visited Pretoria BG on 22 November and 30 December and recorded 24 species on both occasions. December's visit included the first sightings this season of Black Heart (*Uranotauma nubifer nubifer*) and Black-tipped Acraea (*Stephenia caldarena caldarena*).

The Pretoria butterfly checklist currently contains 88 species.



Garden Acraea
Acraea horta
Pretoria, Gauteng
Hennie Vermaak



Topaz Babul Blue
Azanus jesous
Pretoria, Gauteng
Hennie Vermaak



Pioneer Caper White
Belenois aurota
Pretoria, Gauteng
Hennie Vermaak



Pink Cupreous Ash Blue
Eicochrysops messapus mahallakoaena
Pretoria, Gauteng
Hennie Vermaak



Plain Black-eye
Leptomyrina henningi henningi
Pretoria, Gauteng
Hennie Vermaak



Geranium Bronze
Cacyreus marshalli
Pretoria, Gauteng
Hennie Vermaak



Zebra White
Pinacoteryx eriphia eriphia
Pretoria, Gauteng
Hennie Vermaak



African Leopard
Phalanta phalantha aethiopica
Pretoria, Gauteng
Hennie Vermaak



Dusky Lineblue
Pseudonacaduba sichela sichela
Pretoria, Gauteng
Hennie Vermaak



White-spot Sandman
Spialia spio
Pretoria, Gauteng
Hennie Vermaak



Banded Gold Tip
Teracolus eris eris
Pretoria, Gauteng
Hennie Vermaak



Dancing Amber
Telchinia serena
Pretoria, Gauteng
Hennie Vermaak



Southern Scarlet
Axiocerses tjoane tjoane
Pretoria, Gauteng
Hennie Vermaak



Black Heart
Uranotauma nubifer nubifer
Pretoria, Gauteng
Hennie Vermaak



African Migrant
Catopsilia florella
Pretoria, Gauteng
Hennie Vermaak



Painted Emperor
Charaxes saturnus saturnus
Pretoria, Gauteng
Hennie Vermaak



Tiny Grass Blue
Zizula hylax
Pretoria, Gauteng
Hennie Vermaak



Garden Commodore
Precis archesia archesia
Pretoria, Gauteng
Hennie Vermaak

Walter Sisulu (Jeremy Dobson and Lourens Erasmus)

Jeremy visited Walter Sisulu Botanical Garden (WSBG) on 12 November and found 38 species, which is a 70% improvement on the count from Nov 2024. Noteworthy species included Russet Protea (*Capys disjunctus*), and the first sightings this season of Pale Painted Ranger (*Nervia nerva nerva*) and Spotted-eye Small Ringlet (*Paternympha narycia*).



Garden Acraea
Acraea horta
WSBG, Gauteng
Jeremy Dobson



Russet Protea
Capys disjunctus
WSBG, Gauteng
Jeremy Dobson



Rayed Blue
Actizera lucida
WSBG, Gauteng
Jeremy Dobson



Spotted-eye Small Ringlet
Paternympha narycia
WSBG, Gauteng
Jeremy Dobson



Pale Painted Ranger
Nervia nerva nerva
WSBG, Gauteng
Jeremy Dobson



Garden Commadore
Precis archesia archesia
WSBG, Gauteng
Jeremy Dobson

The following month (20 December), Lourens Erasmus visited WSBG and recorded a rather disappointing 25 species: heavy rainfall over large parts of South Africa has not, as yet, resulted in large numbers of butterflies. Tailed Meadow Blue (*Cupidopsis jobates jobates*) was recorded from WSBG for the first time this season.

Progress is being tracked graphically, using the same principles adopted in the Butterfly Index (refer to the following article). Initially, I used “Biome Factors” to compensate for regional butterfly abundance at the various gardens, but these have subsequently been changed to “Locality Factors”, which relate to the number of butterflies recorded from the garden under consideration. The number of species observed during the course of a single day’s visit is converted to an Abundance Index (Ax) using the following formula:

$$Ax = 1 + (n / (10 * LF))^{1/1.5}$$

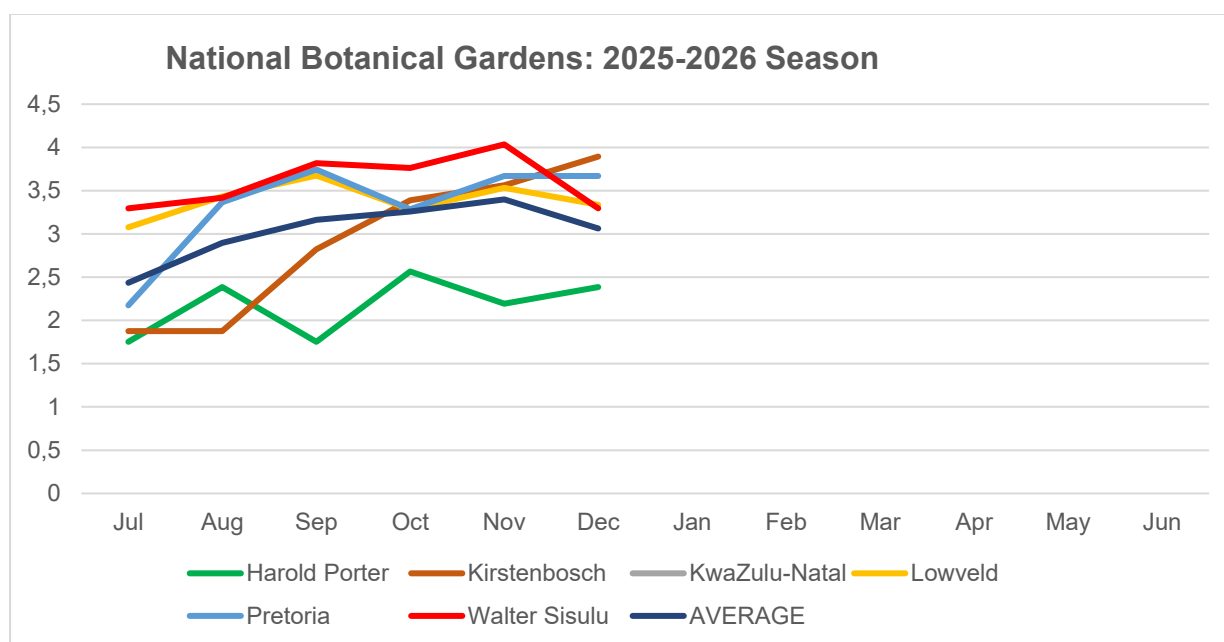
Where “n” is the number of species observed and “LF” is a locality factor, obtained from the following table:

GARDEN	CHECKLIST	FACTOR (LF)
Harold Porter	49	30,6%
Kirstenbosch	39	24,4%
KwaZulu-Natal	136	85,0%
Lowveld	139	86,9%
Pretoria	88	55,0%
Walter Sisulu	115	71,9%

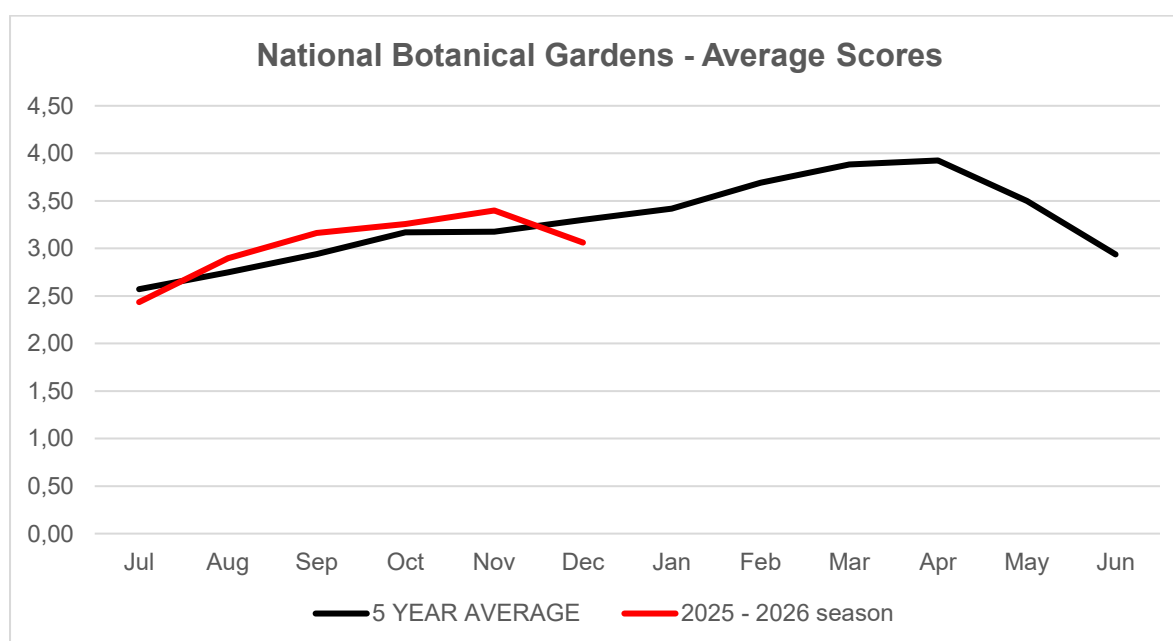
These locality factors will change, as we acquire more data, but the idea is to compare relative butterfly abundance at our National Butterfly Gardens on a like-for-like basis.

A record summary for the 2025 – 2026 season is indicated below. The Western Cape sites (Harold Porter and Kirstenbosch) were lagging behind earlier this season, although Kirstenbosch has now crept into the lead!

	2025 - 2026 SEASON																							
	Jul		Aug		Sep		Oct		Nov		Dec		Jan		Feb		Mar		Apr		May		Jun	
	n	Ax	n	Ax	n	Ax	n	Ax	n	Ax	n	Ax	n	Ax	n	Ax	n	Ax	n	Ax	n	Ax	n	Ax
Harold Porter	2	1,8	5	2,4	2	1,8	6	2,6	4	2,2	5	2,4												
Kirstenbosch	2	1,9	2	1,9	6	2,8	9	3,4	10	3,6	12	3,9												
KwaZulu-Natal											6	1,8												
Lowveld	26	3,1	33	3,4	38	3,7	30	3,3	35	3,5	31	3,3												
Pretoria	7	2,2	20	3,4	25	3,7	19	3,3	24	3,7	24	3,7												
Walter Sisulu	25	3,3	27	3,4	34	3,8	33	3,8	38	4	25	3,3												



Average indices since the commencement of butterfly-monitoring of the National Botanical Gardens are indicated below. To avoid the graph getting too cluttered, the average for the last 5 years (black line) is compared to the 2025-2026 season (red line).



South African Butterfly Index

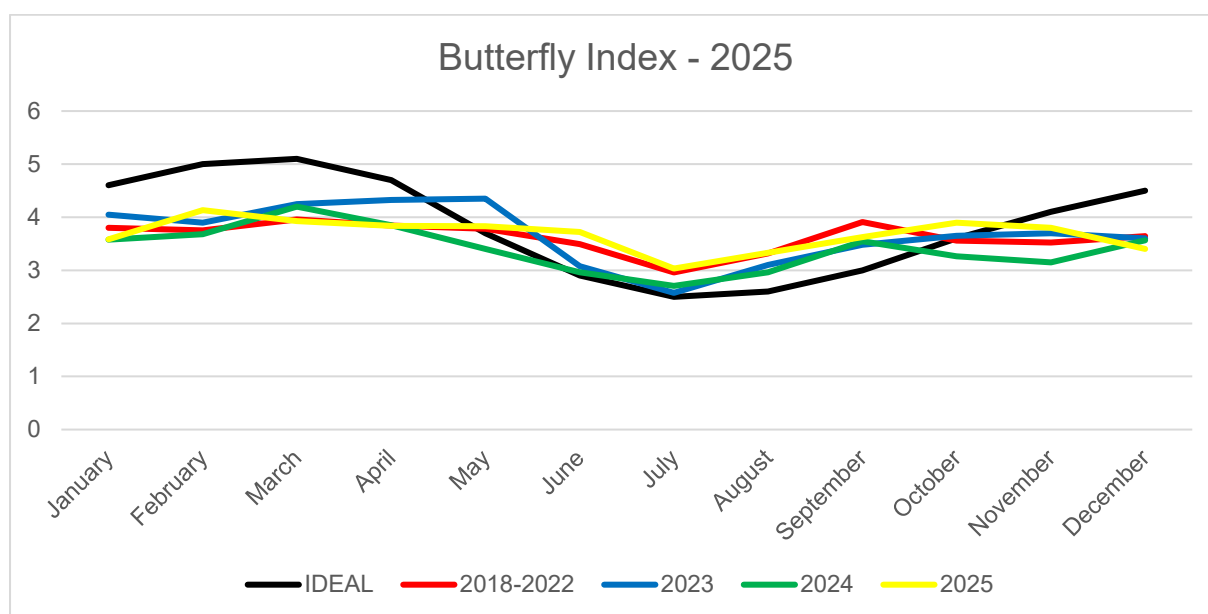
Jeremy Dobson

The SA Butterfly Index is tracking trends of butterfly abundance in South Africa, post January 2018 (I've added "SA" to the title, as another Butterfly Index has commenced in the UK). Supplementing this project, LepSoc Africa are conducting butterfly surveys of several National Botanical Gardens, which is incorporated into the Butterfly Index data if there are no "better" scores.

We have now completed eight years of butterfly surveys. For clarity, the scores for the first five years have been averaged (red line); 2023 is indicated in blue, 2024 in green and 2025 in yellow. In addition, there is a hypothetical "ideal" (black line).

No real trends have emerged yet, other than that butterfly abundance in the summer months is significantly less than "ideal" whereas in winter the numbers are generally higher!

2025 (yellow) has been, generally, slightly better than 2024 (green), although it dropped below the green line in December.



For the Butterfly Index, I require the number of species seen at a single locality in a single day. If your survey is superficial (less than 1-hour in duration) or based on observations from a suburban garden or a farm, please let me know and I'll multiply the number obtained by 1.5.

Steve Woodhall's Butterfly App is a great way of saving butterfly checklists. If you forward me lists, I will ensure that they are submitted to LepiBase and that the records are included with our annual provincial data submissions.

For information, the Abundance Index (Ax) is calculated using the following formula, where n represents the species-count from a site and F is the relevant percentage factor from the Biome or Locality table:

$$Ax = 1 + (n / (10 * F))^{1/1.5}$$

Biome factors (Fb) are indicated in the table below. In instances where records are obtained from a locality with an established checklist, Locality Factors (LF) are used instead.

ABUNDANCE INDEX	NUMBER OF SPECIES RECORDED FROM A SINGLE LOCALITY IN A SINGLE DAY						
	BIOME						
	Lowveld Savanna or Forest (L.S.)	Highveld Savanna (H.S)	Highveld Grassland (H.G.)	Arid Savanna (A.S)	Karoo (K)	Fynbos (F)	Afromontane Forest (A.F.)
5 Excellent	>79	>59	>39	>27	>19	>20	>59
4 Good	52 to 79	39 to 59	26 to 39	19 to 27	13 to 19	13 to 20	39 to 59
3 Average	29 to 51	21 to 38	15 to 25	10 to 18	8 to 12	8 to 12	21 to 38
2 Poor	10 to 28	7 to 21	5 to 14	4 to 9	3 to 7	3 to 7	7 to 21
1 Very Poor	≤9	≤7	≤4	≤3	≤2	≤2	≤7
0 No Data							

Methodology

1/. Each province receives a monthly rating between, which will be more than 1 (Very Poor) and is unlikely to exceed 5 (Excellent). Lesotho and Eswatini are included as Provinces.

2/. The rating is based on the highest recorded individual monthly species-count within the province under consideration. The numbers are based on representatives of the Papilionoidea superfamily (traditional butterflies).

3/. In instances where data is acquired from several biomes within a single province, the highest rating will be used.

Annual prizes will be awarded to the most active provincial representatives!

Objectives

- 1/. To monitor long term trends in butterfly abundance throughout South Africa
- 2/. To compare seasonal and annual abundance indices
- 3/. To compare current butterfly-counts with historical benchmarks

Data – November and December:

PROVINCE	2025									
	NOVEMBER					DECEMBER				
	Index	Score	Locality	Biome	Observer	Index	Score	Locality	Biome	Observer
Gauteng	4,0	26	Suikerbosrand	H.G.	Jeremy Dobson	3,3	25	WSBG	LF	Lourens Erasmus
KwaZulu-Natal	0					3,2	33	Izingolweni	L.S.	Jeremy Dobson
Limpopo	0					0				
Mpumalanga	3,5	35	Lowveld	LF	Christopher Willis	3,8	26	Belfast	H.G.	Jeremy Dobson
Western Cape	3,6	10	Kirstenbosch	LF	Fanie Rautenbach	3,9	12	Kirstenbosch	LF	Fanie Rautenbach
Eastern Cape	0					0				
Northern Cape	0					0				
Southern Cape	0					0				
North West	0					0				
Free State	4,1	12	Heilbron	H.G.	Jeremy Dobson	2,8	12	Korannaberg	H.G.	Jeremy Dobson
Lesotho	0					0				
Eswatini	0					0				

LF in the Biome field refers to a Locality Factor, which are used when the number of species from a given locality are well documented; other abbreviations are as per the Abundance Factor table.

Summarized Butterfly Index data – 2025:

PROVINCE	2025 - SUMMARY											
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gauteng	3,5	5,4	4,6	3,9	3,6	3,3	3,3	3,4	3,8	3,8	4,0	3,3
KwaZulu-Natal	2,5	0	3,3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3,2
Limpopo	0	3,8	0	0	3,8	0	0	0	3,9	4,5	0	0
Mpumalanga	3,2	4,3	3,9	3,7	3,9	3,7	3,1	3,2	4,0	3,9	3,5	3,8
Western Cape	3,4	4,3	3,9	3,9	3,6	2,1	3,6	2,4	2,8	3,4	3,6	3,9
Eastern Cape	0	0	3,8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Northern Cape	0	0	4,3	0	0	0	0	3,7	0	0	0	0
Southern Cape	0	3,7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
North West	4,9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Free State	4	3,3	3,1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4,1	2,8
Lesotho	3,6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Eswatini	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Caterpillar Rearing Group (CRG)

Hermann Staude

Anybody wishing to join the CRG, please refer to the LepSoc Africa website for details (<http://www.lepsoc.org.za/>) or visit the Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/caterpillarrg/>

COREL

Custodians of Rare and Endangered Lepidoptera (COREL) is a joint LepSoc Africa–Brenton Blue Trust project to secure the survival of our threatened butterfly and moth species. Graham Henning has taken over the management of this vital project from Mark Williams.

If you would like to assist COREL in any capacity, please contact me at jchdobson@gmail.com
A link to the latest COREL guidelines is attached below:

[COREL - Structure and guidelines](#)

Metamorphosis

Jonathan Colville has taken over **Dave Edge's** role as editor of *Metamorphosis* from January. Andrew Noss is the copy editor. There are vacancies for an editor (Butterflies) and an editor (Moths); please contact Dave, Jonathan or me if you are interested.

Metamorphosis Volume 35 (December 2024) has been printed and is on sale to LepSoc Africa members for R 190. This is a compilation of articles, taxonomic papers and notes published online by *Metamorphosis* during 2024.

For more details, view the *Metamorphosis* section of the LepSoc Africa website under the Publications tab (lepsocafrika.org)

Please order hard copies using the online shop (<https://lepsocafrika.org/>) or contact Dave at orachrysops@gmail.com.

2025

Thirteen papers have been published in Vol 36 so far:

Note on *Cupidesthes robusta* Aurivillius, 1895 (Lepidoptera: Lycaenidae: Lycaenesthini).
[Michel Libert & Szabolcs Sáfián](#)

Studies on Crambidae IX—On the identity of *Botis bicolor* Swainson, [1821], its generic placement, some related species, and a new species from South Africa (Pyraloidea, Crambidae, Spilomelinae).
[Koen Maes](#)

New anthropogenic lycaenid arrivals in the Levant
[Dubi Benyamini & Moshe Laudon](#)

A Chain of Butterflies—Butterfly Endemism in Africa's Eastern Mountains
[Colin Congdon, Steve Collins, Alan Gardiner & Julian Bayliss](#)

Butterfly diversity (Lepidoptera: Papilionoidea) within the Ibanda Makera forest remnant, Eastern Province of Rwanda.
[Jean de Dieu Uwizelimana, Constantin Sibomana, Alphonse Nzarora & Ian James Gordon](#)

Why is South Africa so rich in butterfly species, and why are so many of them endemic?
[Ernest Pringle & Steve Woodhall](#)

Studies on Crambidae VIII: New species from the Afrotropical region (Lepidoptera: Pyraloidea: Crambidae).
[Koen Maes](#)

Studies on Crambidae VII – *Lingulabotys* gen. nov. from Africa. (Pyraloidea, Crambidae, Spilomelinae).
[Koen Maes](#)

Michel Libert

Leif Aarvik

Thierry Bouyer

David Agassiz

Timm Karisch

2024

Vol 35 has been published, and hard copies are on sale for R 190 (plus postage where applicable).

[illegible]

2023

Vol 34 can be purchased for R 250 (plus postage where applicable).



2022

The cost of Vol 33 (170 pages, 17 articles) is R 220, plus postage where applicable. The front and back covers are shown below:



2021

Volume 32 Part 1 29 Articles (R 220 excluding postage).

OTHER BUTTERFLIES

Johan Heyns has a large collection of photographs, which are included as a regular feature in this newsletter.

We stay with the **Noctuidae** family, but move to subfamily **Plusiinae**:



Chrysodeixis acuta
Johan Heyns



Chrysodeixis acuta
Johan Heyns



Syngnatha circumflexa
Johan Heyns



Trichoplusia orichalcea
Johan Heyns



Vittaplusia vittata
Johan Heyns



Chrysodeixis chalcites
Johan Heyns

REGIONAL ROUNDUP

Gauteng

Colleen and Jeremy Dobson went for a walk at Suikerbosrand Nature Reserve on 2 November - as the COREL custodian for Toothed Russet (*Aloeides dentatis dentatis*), Jeremy wanted to see whether the butterfly was flying and in what numbers. Suikerbosrand was pretty good: lots of flowers and an above average butterfly count of 26 species – including *A. dentatis*, which was fairly common, over a wide area. An observation from Suikerbosrand is that if you follow the Bokmakierie Trail in a clockwise direction, you've got a good chance of finding *dentatis* on the first half of the trail, up until a small valley at 26° 29.267'S, 28° 10.797'E. Thereafter, you will only find Hillside Russet (*Aloeides henningi*).



Toothed Russet
Aloeides dentatis dentatis
Suikerbosrand, Gauteng
Jeremy Dobson



Hillside Russet
Aloeides henningi
Suikerbosrand, Gauteng
Jeremy Dobson



Pea Blue
Lampides boeticus
Suikerbosrand, Gauteng
Jeremy Dobson



Pioneer Caper White
Belenois aurota
Suikerbosrand, Gauteng
Jeremy Dobson



Festive Red Tiger
Brepheos festiva
Suikerbosrand, Gauteng
Jeremy Dobson



African Yellow Pansy
Junonia hierta cebrene
Suikerbosrand, Gauteng
Jeremy Dobson



Plain Black-eye
Leptomyrina henningi henningi
Suikerbosrand, Gauteng
Jeremy Dobson



Black Heart
Uranotauma nubifer nubifer
Suikerbosrand, Gauteng
Jeremy Dobson



Dotted Pierrot
Tarucus sybaris sybaris
Suikerbosrand, Gauteng
Jeremy Dobson

Some photos from Walter Sisulu Botanical Gardens:



African Plain Tiger
Danaus chrysippus orientis
WSBG, Gauteng
Jeremy Dobson



Meadow Blue
Cupidopsis cissus cissus
WSBG, Gauteng
Jeremy Dobson



A pair of beetles on a Scabious flower
WSBG, Gauteng
Jeremy Dobson



Garden Acraea
Acraea horta
WSBG, Gauteng
Jeremy Dobson



Black Pie
Tuxentius melaena melaena
WSBG, Gauteng
Jeremy Dobson



Striped Policeman
Coeliades forestan forestan
WSBG, Gauteng
Jeremy Dobson



Geranium Bronze
Cacyreus marshalli
WSBG, Gauteng
Jeremy Dobson



Southern Twin Dotted Border
Mylothris rueppellii haemus
WSBG, Gauteng
Jeremy Dobson



Painted Emperor
Charaxes saturnus saturnus
WSBG, Gauteng
Jeremy Dobson



Geranium Bronze
Cacyreus marshalli
Johannesburg, Gauteng
Michael Kaninski



African Blue Pansy
Junonia orithya madagascariensis
Johannesburg, Gauteng
Riaan Lizamore

Eastern Cape



Modest Skulker
Isoteinon inornatus
Stutterheim, Eastern Cape
Stewart MacLachlan



Black-bordered Babul Blue
Azanus moriqua
Stutterheim, Eastern Cape
Stewart MacLachlan



Amakosa Rocksitter
Durbania amakosa amakosa
Stutterheim, Eastern Cape
Stewart MacLachlan



Vine-leaf Vagrant
Eronia cleodora
Stutterheim, Eastern Cape
Stewart MacLachlan



Variable Nimble Blue
Lepidochrysops variabilis
Stutterheim, Eastern Cape
Stewart MacLachlan



Dark Speckled Widow
Dingana bowkeri bowkeri
Stutterheim, Eastern Cape
Stewart MacLachlan



Eastern Dotted Border
Mylothris agathina agathina
Makhanda (Grahamstown), Eastern Cape
Lynette Rudman



White-barred Amber
Telchinia encedon encedon
Makhanda (Grahamstown), Eastern Cape
Lynette Rudman

Free State



Drakensberg Grassveld Sylph
Metisella malgacha orina
The Sentinel, Free State
Jeremy Dobson



Gaika Netted Brown
Pseudonympha gaika
The Sentinel, Free State
Jeremy Dobson



Machacha Netted Brown
Pseudonympha machacha
The Sentinel, Free State
Jeremy Dobson



Eastern Sorrel Copper
Lafron clarki
Harrismith, Free State
Jeremy Dobson



Hillside Russet
Aloeides henningi
Clarens, Free State
Jeremy Dobson



Maluti Russet
Aloeides maluti
Golden Gate, Free State
Jeremy Dobson



Lesotho Russet
Aloeides rileyi
Golden Gate, Free State
Jeremy Dobson



Golden Gate Indigo Blue
Orachrysops montanus
Clarens, Free State
Jeremy Dobson



Pale Painted Ranger
Nervia nerva nerva
Vredefort Dome, Free State
Reinier Terblanche



African Meadow White
Pontia helice
Vredefort Dome, Free State
Reinier Terblanche



Rocky Hillside Brown
Stygionympha wichgrafi wichgrafi
Vredefort Dome, Free State
Reinier Terblanche

KZN

Jeremy Dobson visited the northern Drakensberg in mid-December with Colleen and Chris Dobson. Butterflies weren't swarming, but they found a few nice species. Witsieshoek is on the KwaZulu-Natal / Free State border, so some of the images below may belong to the Free State.

Based on a pupa that Chris found, they were about a week too early for Maluti Amakosa Rocksitter (*Durbania amakosa sagittata*).



Free State Toothed Russet
Aloeides dentatis maseruna
Witsieshoek, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



Small Mountain Russet
Aloeides oreas
Witsieshoek, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



Garden Acraea
Acraea horta
Witsieshoek, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



Table Mountain Beauty
Aeropetes tulbaghia
Witsieshoek, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



Northern Orange-banded Protea
Capys alpheus extentus
Witsieshoek, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



Water Bronze
Cacyreus fracta fracta
Witsieshoek, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



Maluti Amakosa Rocksitter (pupa)
Durbania amakosa sagittata
Witsieshoek, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



Restless Indigo Blue
Orachrysops lacrimosa
Mahai Valley, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



Plain Hillside Brown
Stygionympha scotina scotina
Mahai Valley, KZN
Jeremy Dobson

Following the Berg leg of their holiday, the Dobsons spent a few days on the KZN South Coast. Butterfly abundance and diversity was poor, although – after a lot of searching - they recorded a few coastal endemics, such as White-spotted Brown Nimble Blue (*Lepidochrysops ketsi leucomacula*), Eastern Yellow-banded Evening Brown (*Gnophodes diversa*) and Coastal Rocky Hillside Brown (*Stygionympha wichgrafi grisea*).

In addition, for the first time in several years, Jeremy found a couple of Basuto Skolly (*Thestor basutus basutus*) in the Umtamvuna valley.



Yellow Zulu
Alaena amazoula amazoula
Izingolweni, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



Black-bordered Babul Blue
Azanus moriqua
Izingolweni, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



Oriental Bee Hawk
Cephonodes virescens
Izingolweni, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



Velvet Black Prince
Eriboea ethalion ethalion
Izingolweni, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



Southern Round-winged Orange Tip
Colotis euippe omphale
Izingolweni, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



Red-tab Policeman
Coeliades keithloa
Izingolweni, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



Veined Lady
Graphium leonidas leonidas
Izingolweni, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



Lilac-based Black-eye
Leptomyrina gorgias gorgias
Izingolweni, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



Common Zebra Blue
Leptotes pirithous pirithous
Izingolweni, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



Southern Variable Imitator
Pseudacraea lucretia tarquinea
Izingolweni, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



Common Citrus Swallowtail
Papilio demodocus demodocus
Izingolweni, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



Southern Narrow-banded Malachite
Papilio nireus lyaeus
Izingolweni, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



Variable Bush Brown
Bicyclus safitza safitza
Old Pont, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



Shadow Elf
Eretis umbra umbra
Umtamvuna, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



Phoenix Palm Night-fighter
Zophopetes dysmephila
Leisure Bay, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



Southern Diverse Albatross
Appias epaphia contracta
Old Pont, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



Eastern Yellow-banded Evening Brown
Gnophodes diversa
Old Pont, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



White-spotted Brown Nimble Blue
Lepidochrysops ketsi leucomacula
Umtamvuna, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



Polka Dot
Pardopsis punctatissima
Umtamvuna, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



Coastal Rocky Hillside Brown
Stygionympha wichgrafi grisea
Umtamvuna, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



Basuto Skolly
Thestor basutus basutus
Umtamvuna, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



White Pearl Emperor
Charaxes varanes varanes
Oribi Gorge, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



Black-spotted Ranger
Kedestes macomo
Oribi Gorge, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



Spotted Imp
Pentila tropicalis tropicalis
Oribi Gorge, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



Apricot Russet
Aloeides aranda
Umtamvuna, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



Buff-tipped Ragged Skipper
Abantis canopus
Izingolweni, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



Purple-brown Fairy Hairstreak
Hypolycaena philippus philippus
Izingolweni, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



Black-based Acraea
Stephenie natalica
Umtamvuna, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



Brown Playboy
Capys antalus
Izingolweni, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



False Dotted Border
Belenois thyra thyra
Izingolweni, KZN
Jeremy Dobson



African Peach Moth
Egybolis valliantina
Gillitts, KZN
Steve Woodhall



Conchylia ditissimaria
Ncandu, KZN
Steve Woodhall



Pioneer Caper White
Belenois aurota
Ncandu, KZN
Angus Burns



Rainforest Dancing Brown
Cassionympha cassius
Ncandu, KZN
Angus Burns



Eastern Gold-spotted Sylph
Metisella metis paris
Ncandu, KZN
Angus Burns



Restless Indigo Blue
Orachrysops lacrimosa
Ncandu, KZN
Angus Burns



Soaring Bush Kite
Papilio euphranor
Ncandu, KZN
Angus Burns



Painted Lady
Vanessa cardui
Ncandu, KZN
Angus Burns

Western Cape



Grey Hairtail
Anthene definita definita
Knysna, Western Cape
Chris Bourlay

Mpumalanga

Jeremy Dobson visited Wakkerstroom on 30 December, primarily to try and obtain type DNA samples for Mountain Russet (*Aloeides titei*). He was successful, but butterflies were very scarce – this was surprising, as previous visits to nearby Dirkiesdorp, at similar times of the year, have usually been very productive.



Small Mountain Russet
Aloeides oreas
Wakkerstroom, Mpumalanga
Jeremy Dobson



Mountain Russet
Aloeides titei
Wakkerstroom, Mpumalanga
Jeremy Dobson



Northern Orange-banded Protea
Capys alpheus extentus
Wakkerstroom, Mpumalanga
Jeremy Dobson



Pea Blue
Lampides boeticus
Wakkerstroom, Mpumalanga
Jeremy Dobson



Plain Black-eye
Leptomyrina henningi henningi
Wakkerstroom, Mpumalanga
Jeremy Dobson



African Meadow White
Pontia helice
Wakkerstroom, Mpumalanga
Jeremy Dobson



False Silver-bottom Brown
Pseudonympha magoides
Wakkerstroom, Mpumalanga
Jeremy Dobson



Southern Gaudy Commodore
Precis octavia sesamus
Wakkerstroom, Mpumalanga
Jeremy Dobson

Jeremy and Christopher Dobson visited the Machadodorp area on 15 December. The main reason for the visit was to obtain samples of Long-winged Orange Amber (*Telchinia alalonga*) for Dominique Bernaud. Dominique – a LepSoc Africa member and a renowned expert on African *Acraea* – currently considers all members of the *Telchinia anacreon* group to be regional forms of a single species. Jeremy believes that this position will be reviewed pending receipt of the *alalonga* (and, hopefully, subsequent *anacreon*) specimens.



Black-bordered Babul Blue
Azanus moriqua
Belfast, Mpumalanga
Jeremy Dobson



Mountain Russet
Aloeides titei
Belfast, Mpumalanga
Jeremy Dobson



Northern Orange-banded Protea
Capys alpheus extensus
Belfast, Mpumalanga
Jeremy Dobson



Marmalade Silverline
Cigaritis mozambica
Belfast, Mpumalanga
Jeremy Dobson



African Meadow White
Pontia helice
Belfast, Mpumalanga
Jeremy Dobson



Southern Gaudy Commodore
Precis octavia sesamus
Belfast, Mpumalanga
Jeremy Dobson



Striped Sandman
Spialia ferax
Belfast, Mpumalanga
Jeremy Dobson



Rocky Hillside Brown
Stygionympha wichgrafi wichgrafi
Belfast, Mpumalanga
Jeremy Dobson



Long-winged Orange Amber (f)
Telchinia alalonga
Belfast, Mpumalanga
Jeremy Dobson



Long-winged Orange Amber (m)
Telchinia alalonga
Belfast, Mpumalanga
Jeremy Dobson



Rainforest Dancing Brown
Cassionympha cassius
Elandshoogte, Mpumalanga
Jeremy Dobson



White-banded Sash
Papilio echerioides echerioides
Elandshoogte, Mpumalanga
Jeremy Dobson

Some photos by Lourens Erasmus from Verloren Valei



Garden Commodore
Precis archesia archesia
Verloren Valei, Mpumalanga
Lourens Erasmus



Southern Gaudy Commodore
Precis octavia sesamus
Verloren Valei, Mpumalanga
Lourens Erasmus



Garden Acraea
Acraea horta
Verloren Valei, Mpumalanga
Lourens Erasmus



Stoffberg Russet
Aloeides rossouwi
Verloren Valei, Mpumalanga
Lourens Erasmus



Lydenburg Golden Opal
Chrysoritis aethon
Verloren Valei, Mpumalanga
Lourens Erasmus



Marsh Netted Brown
Pseudonympha paludis
Verloren Valei, Mpumalanga
Lourens Erasmus

Ghana



Western Black Sprite
Celaenorrhinus maesseni
Ghana
Nick Eldred



Pale Fairy Hairstreak
Hypolycaena lebona
Ghana
Nick Eldred



Jodutta Amber
Telchinia jodutta
Ghana
Nick Eldred

Kenya



Jade-banded Swallowtail
Papilio phorcas
Karen, Kenya
Steve Collins



Black-winged Acraea
Stephenia asboloplintha
Karen, Kenya
Steve Collins

The Gambia



Black-bordered Babul Blue
Azanus moriqua
The Gambia
Allen Holmes



West African Pirate
Catacroptera cloanthe ligata
The Gambia
Allen Holmes



Dimorphic Forester
Euphaedra medon medon
The Gambia
Allen Holmes



Variable Woolly Legs
Lachnocnema emperamus
The Gambia
Allen Holmes

Rwanda



Cluster of Maiden moths
Amata species
Akajera, Rwanda
Dr Capable



Emperor moth
Akajera, Rwanda
Dr Capable



Moth
Akajera, Rwanda
Dr Capable



Moth
Akajera, Rwanda
Dr Capable

Uganda



Dark Goblin
Aslauga purpurascens
Nkima Forest Lodge, Uganda
Pamela Sai



Coffee Playboy
Capys lorisona
Kibale, Uganda
Rogers Muhwezi



Yellow-disc Blueboy
Pilodeudorix baginei
Mabira, Uganda
Rogers Muhwezi



Orange Fluttering Buff
Toxochitona gerda
Mabira, Uganda
Rogers Muhwezi



Rippled Sapphire Flash
Stempfferia cercene
Kibale, Uganda
Rogers Muhwezi



Mabira Ghost
Pseudopontia mabira
Mabira, Uganda
Sui Fai Pun

Zambia



Assorted mud-puddling butterflies
Kazangula, Zambia
Matthew Cock



Veined Lady
Graphium leonidass
Kazangula, Zambia
Matthew Cock



Cream-striped Swordtail
Graphium porthaon
Kazangula, Zambia
Matthew Cock



Azure Hairstreak
Hemiolaus caeculus
Kazangula, Zambia
Matthew Cock



Mimic Diadem
Hypolimnys misippus
Kazangula, Zambia
Matthew Cock



Forest Leopard
Phalanta eurytis
Kazangula, Zambia
Matthew Cock

Zimbabwe



Bordered Mottled Buff
Baliochila barnesi
Mutare, Zimbabwe
Gary Douglas



Large Frostwing
Ornipholidotos peucetia
Mutare, Zimbabwe
Gary Douglas

LEPSOC AFRICA COUNCIL

Elected Executive Councillors and LSA Directors:

- Lynn Katsoulis (Chairperson)
- Kevin Cockburn (Secretary)
- Dave Edge (Treasurer)

Co-opted Councillors

- Jonathan Colville / Dave Edge (Editor of *Metamorphosis*)
- Graham Henning (Conservation)

Branch Chairmen

- Lynn Katsoulis (Highveld – Gauteng, North West and Free State)
- Kevin Cockburn (KwaZulu-Natal)
- Andrew Morton (Western Cape)
- Ernest Pringle (Eastern Cape)
- Hanna Edge (Southern Cape)
- Vaughan Jessnitz (Limpopo)
- Jeremy Dobson (Mpumalanga)
- Michael Ochse (Germany)

Metamorphosis Volume 35 (2024) has been printed and is on sale for R 250. Volume 34 (2023) may be purchased for R250.

A schedule of subscriptions for 2025 is attached below (details of 2026 subscriptions will circulated shortly):

LEPSOC AFRICA - SUBSCRIPTIONS 2025									
2025	Annual subscription fee (current year i.e 2025)			<i>Metamorphosis</i> printed copy (preceding year i.e 2024)			Annual subscriptions, <u>plus</u> printed copy of <i>Metamorphosis</i>		
Category	South African	Africa	Inter- national	South African	Africa	Inter- national	South African	Africa	Inter- national
Sponsor*	R 1 550	R 1 550	R 1 700	Included	Included	Included	R 1 550	R 1 550	R 1 700
Ordinary	R 365	R 365	R 435	TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA
Pensioner (over 60 yrs)	R 270	R 270	R 310	TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA
Student (under 23 yrs)	R 190	R 190	R 250	TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA
Family Membership**	R 550	R 550	R 550	TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA
Family (Pensioners)	R 420	R 420	R 420	TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA

*Sponsor members are entitled to a free copy of *Metamorphosis*, but not supplementary, stand-alone publications, such as the CRG results or the SALCA assessments.

**Family Membership is available to married couples or life partners, plus dependent children under the age of 18.

MEMBERSHIP OF LEPSOC AFRICA IS FREE TO ANYONE UNDER THE AGE OF 16

Subscriptions are due on 01 January each year and, for new members, are discounted by 50% after 30 June; to renew your membership, click on the following link:

[LepSoc Africa subscriptions](#)

PHOTOGRAPH OF THE MONTH

Please forward any photographs that you would like to display in this newsletter, with your identification and the month that the photograph was taken, to ichdobson@gmail.com. There will be a Photograph of the Month (two in each edition); the season runs from August to July and the annual winner is announced in September's edition. The decision, by the editor, is final and will be based on photographic merit, but may be swayed by donations to the Society.

Entries for November



Yellow Red-based Forester
Euphaedra justicia
Raponda Walker, Gabon
Jeremy Dobson



Hawequas Sky-blue Nimble Blue
Lepidochrysops oreas junae
Franschhoek, Western Cape
Stewart MacLachlan



Dimorphic Forester
Euphaedra medon
The Gambia
Allen Holmes



Yellow-disc Blueboy
Pilodeudorix baginei
Mabira, Uganda
Rogers Muhwezi



Pale Fairy Hairstreak
Hypolycaena lebona lebona
Ghana
Nick Eldred



Pale Painted Ranger
Nervia nerva nerva
Vredefort, Free State
Reinier Terblanche



NOVEMBER

November's winner is Lourens Erasmus, with this amazing image of three Beige Ragged Skipper (*Abantis pillaana*) lined up in a row.

The picture was taken in Thabazimbi on 29 November – refer to "Tackling Thabazimbi" elsewhere in this newsletter.

Entries for December



African Clouded Yellow
Colias electo electo
Korannaberg, Free State
Jeremy Dobson



Black Heart
Uranotauma nubifer nubifer
Pretoria, Gauteng
Hennie Vermaak



Small Striped Swordtail
Graphium policeses
Ivory Coast
Danile Julie



Air Commodore
Precis actia
Malawi
Joy du Toit



Southern Gaudy Commodore
Precis octavia sesamus
Verloren Valei, Mpumalanga
Lourens Erasmus



Rocky Hillside Brown
Stygionympha wichgrafi wichgrafi
Vredefort, Free State
Reinier Terblanche



DECEMBER

OK, I'm biased, but December's winner is Hennie Vermaak, who is responsible for the Pretoria National Botanical Garden butterfly-surveys.

Hennie took this great photo of a female Southern Scarlet (*Axiocerses tjoane tjoane*) in Pretoria during December's survey. While *tjoane* is a fairly common butterfly, this is an extraordinarily beautiful specimen.

Collecting and conservation in Côte d'Ivoire, West Africa

Haydon Warren-Gash

Abstract

Despite having lost 90% of its forest cover, Côte d'Ivoire remains an important centre for butterfly biodiversity in West Africa. A three-year survey (1998-2000) produced a total of 780 species. Some 50 taxa were recorded from Côte d'Ivoire for the first time, and a further 20 proved to be either new subspecies or new to science altogether. Extinction of butterfly species in Côte d'Ivoire so far is unlikely, though endemics in the Danane area are under threat from habitat change. There are risks if the forest cover is further eroded.

Detail

Two hours out of Abidjan, as you head west along the coast, tall forest trees start to hug the main road on either side. Drive on, and they become your constant companions for most of the next hour. There is just one small problem. The trees are dead - ring-barked and left standing by sharecroppers in a hurry to plant their coffee and cocoa, rice and cassava.

In a few years, the grey skeletons will rot and disappear. When I left Côte d'Ivoire in mid-2001, there were already many fewer standing than when I arrived, three and a half years earlier. All you will see then will be the new plantings - or worse still, secondary bush, as slash and burn agriculture exhausts the soil and the farmers move on, to repeat the same procedure elsewhere.

In 1960, forest covered most of the southern half of Côte d'Ivoire. Since then, an estimated 90% has gone. Inevitably, some argue. How else was a primarily agricultural economy to develop? But many of the historic collecting sites that helped establish Côte d'Ivoire's entomological reputation vanished in the process. Type localities have become cocoa plantations.

Arriving in late 1997, it did not look good. One of my first visits was to the excellent government mapping service. Their aerial photos showed clearly that even supposedly protected areas were suffering serious encroachment. On the butterfly front, I had high hopes but low expectations.

Experience over the next three years, however, told a different story. Permit in hand - and you are unlikely to get very far in Côte d'Ivoire without one - I set about drawing up checklists from sites around the country. Some were well known, others new. Practicality, and job constraints, meant that the most visited were reachable in a day from Abidjan.

The nearest of all was the Banco Forest. Almost within Abidjan, and now a detached remnant of a much larger forest block, it was nonetheless surprisingly rich. I continued to find new material there until the day I left. The 444 species on the checklist included one new subspecies, since described (*Epamera longicauda haydoni*), one new species still in manuscript, and a host of other little-known material, including a good series of another 'sapphire blue', *Epamera banco*, previously only known from two tatty males.

However, there were some surprising absences, especially among the nymphalids (*Cymothoe egesta* being a prime example: it is regularly encountered in other coastal forests. Perhaps they had never been there. But that, I suggest, is an optimistic reading of the situation. If nothing more, such unexplained absences provide a reminder that small patches of relict forest are likely to see declining species numbers over time. Local populations which vanish, for whatever reason, can no longer be naturally replaced.

Forests next to capital cities acquire their own special characteristics when political instability sets in, as it did in Côte d'Ivoire for most of 2000. Bodies started turning up on forest paths. At one point, the Banco Park Warden asked me to intervene with the Minister of Defence (whose soldiers were widely assumed to be behind the killings) to get the bodies dumped somewhere else. They were, he said, putting off his customers. I politely declined, on the grounds that I had already intervened forcibly over the killings. This seemed to me to be the main issue rather than where the bodies were dumped. He looked at me strangely and shuffled away.

Banco was also the scene of the country's worst ethnic killing in late 2000, when 50 northerners were gunned down near one of my prime collecting spots. There were times when it was, frankly, not a good place to wander alone.

All along the coast, though by no means continuously anymore, patches of forest remain. They stretch from the riverine forest along the Comae River in the East, to Bereby near the Liberian border in the West (though the latter appears on no maps and is fast disappearing). Despite being superficially similar, they turned out to harbour surprisingly different butterfly faunae. Almost everywhere, among my main collecting sites, I turned up at least one species which was both new to science and did not occur in any of the others.

In terms of conservation, I was struck that those forests which appeared to be most species-poor were also those most likely to produce the unusual. In biodiversity, a reminder that numbers are not everything! Azagny, just over an hour west of Abidjan, was especially good in this respect, with a variety of unusual forest floor nymphalids (including *Bebearia warrengashi*) and rare hesperiids, among others.

But even Azagny was not risk free. On my last visit, I narrowly escaped collision with a van veering erratically towards me. Then the van stopped and all became clear. The windscreen was shattered and the driver and passengers riddled with bullets. They had driven through an attempted hi-jack 30 seconds before. They were alive but in urgent need of hospital treatment. I had the interesting task of driving them back through the hi-jack site to get them to medical help. Luckily, the attackers had vanished. But, despite Azagny's entomological pull, I felt no overwhelming urge to go back.

Inland, the destruction of the forest has been particularly severe. Little remains. The Tai Forest in the west is still there. An UNESCO world heritage site, and the largest tract of undisturbed primary forest left in West Africa, it is one of the few places in the country where there are still reasonable quantities of game (though seeing it in a primary forest setting is a separate challenge!). The butterflies are exceptional and include a series of dark green morphs of forest *Euphaedra*, which must have evolved over time to take account of the unusually thick forest cover. The only example of *Euriphene lomaensis*, apart from the Sierra Leone type; was taken there.

Tai is tough to reach, and I did not do it justice. A few short visits were enough to push the species count beyond 400, and to turn up another completely new species. But it needs and deserves a thorough survey, by someone prepared to spend serious time on the spot. That person would do well to remember, though, that this is real rain forest: it rains almost every day, and sometimes for weeks on end during the wet (or should I say 'even wetter') season. It is not for the faint-hearted.

Perhaps the least promising site, on the basis of its appearance was Mt Peko, also in the west, to the north-east of Tai. It is one of the smaller reserves, with much degraded forest and secondary bush, and one rather small hill in the middle. I would not have given it a second thought. But I was asked to help, and the results were little short of amazing. In particular, it proved rich in lycaenids.

The Mt Peko species count, again at around 400, includes an impressive array of insects characteristic of the largely vanished forests of the interior. Another reminder, if one were needed, that conservation needs to be about the full range of biotope and not just the more showy ones.

The north-west includes Mt Nimba (a serious mountain this time!). It is difficult to get to, and surprisingly poor in montane insect fauna: one of the few butterflies with montane affiliations is *Uranothauma belcastroi*, endemic to Nimba and a few of the higher peaks nearby. But Mt Nimba also generates its own lowland species, in the cross-border area leading into Guinea and Liberia. I was lucky to have collectors who made several visits to the area. I passed through but was unable to spend time on the ground (a real regret: I believe strongly in the importance of seeing a biotope for oneself, and getting a personal feel for it, even if much of the subsequent collecting is done by others for you).

Unusual species from this area included *Hypolimnias aubergeri*, named after a French schoolteacher who spent part of his career in the nearby town of Danane. Auberger also found many other wonderful things, which have not been seen since, including the unusual *Euphaedra aubergeri*, the nearest relative of which comes from Cameroon! But here too, the forest is fast disappearing. If there is anywhere in the Côte d'Ivoire forest belt where butterflies are in real danger of extinction as a result of habitat change, it is probably here.

In West Africa generally, butterfly diversity is at its maximum in the forest. The drier country to the north of Côte d'Ivoire is noticeably poorer in species than similar habitats in East Africa. But it has also suffered from comparative neglect. I too was guilty. Insects in the drier areas are very seasonal and very local, and it was a long way to go from Abidjan on the off chance. I am sure that there are species I did not find.

Perhaps the biggest challenge remaining, however, is the dry forest leading into the 'forest-savannah mosaic' just north of the main forest belt. One Ivorian site is well known. There has been a research centre at Lamto for many years, and its former head, Roger Vuattoux, did groundbreaking research on butterfly host plants. I am glad to say that, despite being retired now, he has not completely severed his links. Several species are still known only from Lamto, including *Neptis vindo* and *Euphaedra delera*.

Of the rest, we know little. I was able to become involved in a partial taxonomic survey of Mt Sangbe Reserve, to the west of Lamto, and more clearly disjunct from the main forest belt. Though incomplete, the results strongly suggest that there is a lot to learn, with the likelihood of as-yet undiscovered transition belt species and unusual morphs of wet forest species seeking to adapt to a drier environment.

Over three and a half years, I was able to produce confirmed records for 780 species in Côte d'Ivoire. Of these, around 50 were species which had been previously recorded from elsewhere, but not from Côte d'Ivoire itself, and a further 20 species or subspecies which were new to science. The breakdown of insects by family is as follows:

Hesperiidae	172
Papilionidae	20
Pieridae	34
Acraeinae	36
Danainae	6
Satyrinae	38
Nymphalinae	172
Charaxinae	48
Apaturinae	1
Libytheinae	1
Lycaenidae	252
Riodinidae	0
TOTAL	780

(For anyone interested, a full breakdown by species and location is available from me on request; but you will need Works for Windows on your system to be able to access it).

Some 80 further species have been recorded at various time by other authors. Of these, around a dozen are doubtful records based on misidentification, or earlier names of species which have since been revised. The rest, however, are good species, such as *Aphnaeus gilloni* and deep forest hesperiids from the genus *Leona*, that will still be there. Although a few may be threatened, especially those endemic to the Danane area, I think it unlikely that we have yet seen any extinctions in Côte d'Ivoire.

Overall, I estimate that the total butterfly fauna in Côte d'Ivoire will fall not far short of 900 species. This is impressive in itself. It is also a reminder of the work that still remains to be done.

The authorities are aware of the effects of declining forest cover. They see it first in changing rainfall patterns, and the effect this has on agricultural production. They worry about biodiversity, but it takes second place to the pressures from a land hungry population. As elsewhere in Africa, this is a dialectic with no easy answer, but with the particular twist in Côte d'Ivoire that, until recently, farmers were actively encouraged to treat the forest as fallow land to be brought into production.

So the pressure on the forests will continue. I am optimistic in the short term about the prospects for species survival. My survey suggests that butterflies have so far held up to the threat to their habitat remarkably well. Healthy, viable populations can survive in much more restricted areas than they had in the past. The figures from Banco underline that, if well chosen, even relatively small conservation areas can support a wide range of species. This is an important message to those fighting for conservation in West Africa.

But there are no grounds for complacency. Butterflies will only survive as long as their foodplants do. The smaller, or more polluted, that the remaining areas become, the higher the risk that foodplants - and butterflies - will start to disappear.

September 2002 METAMORPHOSIS, VOL. 13, No. 2

FOOTNOTE

This newsletter is compiled by Jeremy Dobson, while Steve Collins and Dave Edge look for obvious taxonomic errors. Carolize Jansen has, very kindly, taken over the editor's role.

The magazine relies on material from you, the members of LepSoc Africa. Please forward any news or photographs that may be of interest to jchdobson@gmail.com.

If anyone has any ideas regarding future format or content, please feel free to make suggestions.

PDFs of previous editions of African Butterfly News can be downloaded here:

EDITION	DATE	LINK
2016-5	Sep 2016	ABN 2016-5
2016-6	Nov 2016	ABN 2016-6
2017-1	Jan 2017	ABN 2017-1
2017-2	Mar 2017	ABN 2017-2
2017-3	May 2017	ABN 2017-3
2017-4	Jul 2017	ABN 2017-4
2017-5	Sep 2017	ABN 2017-5
2017-6	Nov 2017	ABN 2017-6
2018-1	Jan 2018	ABN 2018-1
2018-2	Mar 2018	ABN 2018-2
2018-3	May 2018	ABN 2018-3
2018-4	Jul 2018	ABN 2018-4
2018-5	Sep 2018	ABN 2018-5
2018-6	Nov 2018	ABN 2018-6
2019-1	Jan 2019	ABN 2019-1
2019-2	Mar 2019	ABN 2019-2
2019-3	May 2019	ABN 2019-3
2019-4	July 2019	ABN 2019-4
2019-5	Sep 2019	ABN 2019-5
2019-6	Nov 2019	ABN 2019-6
2020-1	Jan 2020	ABN 2020-1
2020-2	Mar 2020	ABN 2020-2
2020-3	May 2020	ABN 2020-3
2020-4	Jul 2020	ABN 2020-4
2020-5	Sep 2020	ABN 2020-5
2020-6	Nov 2020	ABN 2020-6

EDITION	DATE	LINK
2021-1	Jan 2021	ABN 2021-1
2021-2	Mar 2021	ABN 2021-2
2021-3	May 2021	ABN 2021-3
2021-4	Jul 2021	ABN 2021-4
2021-5	Sep 2021	ABN 2021-5
2021-6	Nov 2021	ABN 2021-6
2022-1	Jan 2022	ABN 2022-1
2022-2	Mar 2022	ABN 2022-2
2022-3	May 2022	ABN 2022-3
2022-4	Jul 2023	ABN 2022-4
2022-5	Sep 2022	ABN 2022-5
2022-6	Nov 2022	ABN 2022-6
2023-1	Jan 2023	ABN 2023-1
2023-2	Mar 2023	ABN 2023-2
2023-3	May 2023	ABN 2023-3
2023-4	Jul 2023	ABN 2023-4
2023-5	Sep 2023	ABN 2023-5
2023-6	Nov 2023	ABN 2023-6
2024-1	Jan 2024	ABN 2024-1
2024-2	Mar 2024	ABN 2024-2
2024-3	May 2024	ABN 2024-3
2024-4	Jul 2024	ABN 2024-4
2024-5	Sep 2024	ABN 2024-5
2024-6	Nov 2024	ABN 2024-6
2025-1	Jan 2025	ABN 2025-1
2025-2	Mar 2025	ABN 2025-2
2025-3	May 2025	ABN 2025-3
2025-4	Jul 2025	ABN 2025-4
2025-5	Sep 2025	ABN 2025-5