Notes on rare butterflies including two species new to Trinidad

By M.J.W. Cock Commonwealth Institute of Biological Control, Curepe, Trinidad.

1. Mimocastnia rothschildi Seitz “Rare Green Dragon” (Riodinidae)

The female of this rare Riodinid was taken for the first time in Trinidad by myself in April 1980 in the Parrylands oilfield. Males have previously only been found in the Inniss Field area of Cats Hill. The female flew down into a sunlit clearing amongst dense forest and settled under a leaf about 1 metre off the ground, with its wings spread. Barcant (1970, Butterflies of Trinidad and Tobago, Collins, London) suggests that the forewing bar is yellow but, as in the original description, in this specimen it is white.

2. Argyrogramma occidentalis G. & S. (Riodinidae)

I caught two males of this species new to Trinidad in April 1980. They were flying together, in a shaft of sunlight in the otherwise shady forest, just to the north of the road leading to the main Textel Station from milestone 9A on the Arima-Blanchisseuse Road. The altitude here is about 600 metres. This species superficially resembles A. hosticta G. & S. (the Shower of Gold) but differs in that it is smaller, the wings are more angular, the ground colour is orange and there is a narrow silvery submarginal band.

3. Polystichtis (Lemonias) maeonides Godart (Riodinidae)

In October 1979 I caught a male of this species feeding on flowers of Eupatorium inulaefolium by the road leading to the main Textel Station from milestone 9¼ on the Arima-Blanchisseuse Road. This species has not previously been recorded from Trinidad. Scott Alston-Smith has, however, drawn my attention to specimens in his own collection (1♂) and in those of Clive Urch (2♂1♀) and Malcolm Barcant (1♂1♀). In appearance, the male resembles the male of P. zeanger Stoll but without the dark apical shading and purplish spots of the forewing. The female has more rounded wings, with similar markings, but the ground colour is a much brighter yellow-orange and is more extensive on the forewing. It would appear to be an extremely rare species since the British Museum has only one specimen (the type, a male, from Guyana) and this may well be the first time the female has been described or illustrated. On the same occasion I also caught a male Parcella amarynthina Felder, a female Mesene hya monostigma Stich. (Orange Underwing) and a female Syrmatia dorila Cramer (White-Spotted tadpole), three Riodinids which are seldom seen.

4. Lemonias parthaon Dalm. “Rare Yellow Underwing” (Riodinidae)

This appears to be another rare Riodinid in Trinidad. I know of two recent captures which were worth recording. Scott Alston-Smith took a male at Fig Walk and I took one in the Guanapo Valley near the river crossing on the track from near milestone 3¼ (February 1980).

5. Pyrrhogyra crameri Auriv. (Nymphalidae)

Barcant (1970), regards this as a doubtful Trinidad species. There are two records — one from Moruga (E.E. Fabian, March 1922) and one from Erin (F. Birch, February 1905). As reported in the Field Naturalist (March 1980) I took one on the field trip to Moruga Bouffe in February 1980. Since then, Clive Urch and Scott Alston-Smith have revisited this area and caught this species, confirming that it is breeding there.

My thanks to Dr. Jeremy Holloway of the Commonwealth Institute of Entomology who determined the A. occidentalis and P. maeonides, and to Scott Alston-Smith who drew my attention to the previous captures of P. maeonides and lent me the female shown in the plate.
Plate 1. Some new or rare Trinidad butterflies not illustrated by Barcant (1970).


7. " " ♂ Underside — do —


9. " " ♂ Underside — do —

*A. carausius* is recorded as a new species for Trinidad in the account of butterflies from Chacachacare Island elsewhere in this issue.