

A Juvenile Butterfly Collector in Trinidad 1933-36

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I lived in Trinidad from my birth in 1925 until 1936 when I was brought to England by my mother. Between 1933 and 1936 our home was in St Ann's Avenue, St Ann's, Port of Spain, opposite the convent, and it was from there that I did most of my early butterfly and insect collecting. It was a short walk up this street into the top of the Royal Botanic Gardens, and most of the butterflies and other specimens that are in my collection, and which can be seen in the photograph*, were caught on the site of the present-day Emperor Valley Zoo.

At least two of these butterflies, both of them *Morphos*, do not appear in Bacant's (1970) *Butterflies of Trinidad and Tobago*, and are therefore of some interest now. I visited the British Museum (Natural History) in South Kensington, London, to try to get them identified, and was there advised by Mr P.R. Ackerley of the Entomology Department to send photos and measurements to the leading authority on the genus *Morpho*, Professor Patrick Blandin, of the Museum National D'Histoire Naturelle in Paris.

Prof. Blandin's reply (pers. comm.) indicates that these two butterflies are new records for the island:

A. Wingspan 135mm. This is alone at the bottom left corner of the right-hand section of my collecting box in the photo of my collection. Prof. Blandin identifies it as: "*M. menelaus*, not *amathonte*; A clearcut character is the colour of the circle of ocellars on ventral side; the colour is a ocher-yellow in *M. amathonte*, a reddish-ocher in *M. menelaus*, and it seems to be the case from your photograph. *M. menelaus* is known from Venezuela, and Le Moulton described a s.sp. *orinocensis* from low Orinoco, but the characteristics of this s.sp. are not evident."

B. On the other side of the box can be seen two *Morphos* (wingspan 132 mm), which Prof Blandin describes as "*M. deidamia*, as shown by the very typical

ventral side. Your specimen is close to the subspecies *M. deidama lecerfi* Le Moulton, from low orinoco, as it appears considering the dorsal side". Hans Boos (pers. comm.) had come to the same conclusion concerning B, citing the illustration of *M. deidama* on p. 236 of Smart's *Encyclopedia* (1976).

Prof. Blandin adds "To my knowledge, the presence of *M. menelaus* and *M. deidama* is new for science, even if not too much surprising: these two species have a very large range in South America, with some geographic variations (a large - too large? - number of subspecies has been described)."

Both butterflies should therefore be added to the list of Trinidad species. They were caught by me at the very top of Emperor Valley, near the end of St Ann's Avenue, in early 1937 or 1936, and I can clearly remember their capture. In those days the hillsides above the St. Ann's valley were still forested, and many beautiful butterflies could be seen even along the main road. Coblenz House had huge sandbox trees (*Hura crepitans*) in its grounds, around the trunks of which flew crackers (*Hamadryas feronia*) and 88s (*Catagramma maimuna*), while further up the valley in cocoa plantations beautiful woodland species such as *Pierella lena* could be caught. In 1937 we moved to 4 First Avenue, Cascade, a more open area with poor vegetation, and I gave up collecting insects.

Acknowledgements:

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References

Bacant, M. 1970. *Butterflies of Trinidad and Tobago*. Collins, London, 314 pp.

Smart, P. 1976. *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Butterfly World*. Hamlyn, London, 275 pp.

* Mr. Guppy submitted with the article two enlarged colour photographs of the collection and colour slides of dorsal & ventral surfaces of the two *Morpho* species that he is claiming are new records for the island. We have chosen to reproduce the photos of the two *Morpho* species (see front cover and p2) - Ed.