

## Notes on the Life History of *Citheronia hamifera* Rothschild, 1907 (Lepidoptera, Saturniidae)

On 4 July 2016 a large ornate caterpillar was found on the northern slope of Flagstaff Hill, Speyside, Tobago (11.3302°, -60.5388°). When first observed the larva was crawling across the leaf litter on the forest floor (Fig. 1). Due to the large size and turgid look of the caterpillar it was thought that it had possibly finished feeding and was searching for a place to pupate, and so it was collected to be raised in captivity. The larva was kept in a small plastic tub containing soil and covered with a mesh lid. On 10 July it developed into a pupa which was partially buried in the soil, the exuviae (cast skin) was deposited next to the pupa. There was no cocoon formation. A female imago emerged on 31 July giving a pupation duration of 21 days. Photographs of the imago (Fig. 2) were sent to Matthew Cock and identified as *Citheronia hamifera* Rothschild, 1907 (Lepidoptera: Saturniidae).

Adults of this family have vestigial mouthparts therefore don't feed and only tend to live for a week or so in order to mate and lay eggs (Tuskes, Tuttle *et al.* 1996). Because this specimen was in an enclosed space she did not find a mate but did deposit a cluster of eggs on the side of the tank, unfortunately these were not preserved or described further.

The genus *Citheronia* is widespread throughout the Americas (Tuskes, Tuttle *et al.* 1996) with 21 species having been reported, the majority in the neotropics (Lemaire 1988). *Citheronia hamifera* was originally described from Trinidad and Guyana. It is the same species that Kaye and Lamont (1927) recorded from Trinidad as *C. mexicana* Grote and Robinson. *C. hamifera* has been previously reported from Tobago, some of the most recent records were four specimens collected by J. Ingraham in 2009 around Englishman's Bay (Cock 2017).

When the caterpillar was found there were a variety of plant species nearby but none could be directly con-



Fig. 1. Final instar caterpillar of *Citheronia hamifera*.



Fig. 2. Preserved *Citheronia hamifera* female.

nected with the caterpillar, i.e. no obvious signs of nibbled leaves were seen. *Citheronia* are known to be polyphagous and feed on a wide variety of plants (Tuskes, Tuttle *et al.* 1996). The habitat in this area is a mix of young secondary forest and lowland rain forest dominated by crappo - cabbage palm (Helmer, Ruzycycki *et al.* 2012).

The adult specimen along with the pupa case and the shed skin of the last larva instar were added to the University of the West Indies Zoology Museum collection under the accession number UWIZM.2016.33.16.

### REFERENCES

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Mike G. Rutherford

mike.g.rutherford@gmail.com