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Memphis pithyusa pithyusa (R. Felder), the southern blue leaf shoemaker of Barcant (1970), is amongst the least known of the larger butterflies of Trinidad. It has been commonly known under the name *Anaea pithyusa*, but the genus *Anaea* has now been split into several genera and *pithyusa* is now placed in the genus *Memphis* in the subfamily Charaxinae of Nymphalidae (Lamas 2004). These are very rare and localised butterflies, last recorded brooding in September and October 1947 at Morne Diable Quarry Road, southern Trinidad by Barcant (1970). Since then there have been only four or so isolated captures from scattered localities.

On 23 August, 2010, I was collecting butterflies along the track at Point Gourde when I noticed several leaf tube shelters on one type of shrub that was very common along the track. Leaf tubes of this sort are characteristically made by caterpillars of the *Anaea* group of genera. The shelters are a funnel-shaped device held together by silk threads in which the caterpillar lives. As the caterpillar increases in size, so does the leaf shelter. These particular shelters were striking because of their silver-grey colour. The undersides of the leaves of this particular shrub are silver-grey in colour, so when rolled to form the leaf tube there is a noticeable contrast with the green of the upper surface of the leaf.

I returned to Point Gourde on 27 August and caught several *M. pithyusa,* both males and females. I was ecstatic to see and catch this little known, rare Trinidad butterfly. They were numerous but localised at the very end of the track adjacent to the Water and Sewerage Authority's facility. I returned to Point Gourde again on 29 August and encountered the butterflies at the same location but also along the track at varying intervals. This time I saw a female laying on the shrubs on which I had found the silver-grey leaf shelters. I suspected immediately that this was the food plant of *M. pithyusa*. The shrub was subsequently identified by the Herbarium at the University of the West Indies as *Croton niveus* (Euphorbiaceae) which is localised in the north-west peninsular of Trinidad and the offshore islands as far as Chacachacare (Philcox 1979). I collected and reared many caterpillars on these three visits and adult *M. pithyusa* emerged during September and October 2010 confirming the food plant of the butterfly.

In January 2011, I returned to collect but could find no trace of the butterfly and no signs of any leaf shelters. This was obviously a localised brooding phenomenon infrequently witnessed. Scott Alston-Smith (pers. comm.) has collected regularly at Point Gourde over the years and has never seen this butterfly or its caterpillars there before. What conditions favoured this localized brooding in August and September 2010 I do not know, but the food plant for *M. pithyusa* has at last been found, at least from the north-west of the island.

Although this butterfly is a great rarity in Trinidad, it is quite common in Central America. The life cycle in

El Salvador on *Croton reflexifolius* and *C. niveus* was described and illustrated by Muyshondt (1975), while Janzen and Hallwachs (2011) provide copious photographs of the early stages from Costa Rica. Based on 500 rearing records from Guanacaste, Costa Rica (Janzen and Hallwachs 2011), *C. schiedeanus* is the normal food plant, while about 5% of records were from *C. niveus*. Beccaloni *et al*. (2008) summarised the other known food plant records. Most are from Central America where seven species of *Croton* are reported as food plants, but one record is from Venezuela where *C. hircinus* is reported.

According to Philcox (1979), 11 species of *Croton* occur in Trinidad, including *C. niveus* and *C. hircinus*, the Venezuelan food plant, which is found in the Northern Range. It therefore seems likely that both of these may be used as food plants, but another species of *Croton* must be used in the south of the island.

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