

***Microceris dulcinea* (Plötz) (Lepidoptera, Hesperiiidae, Pyrrhopyginae) a New Skipper Butterfly Record from Trinidad, W.I.**

iNaturalist is a web-based platform to enable naturalists to share images and identifications, facilitating an important interface between naturalists and researchers. In February 2020, an image of a skipper butterfly posted on iNaturalist by Dempewolf (<https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/38797379>) was spotted by Cock as a species new to the Trinidad fauna. The picture was taken on Hololo Mountain Road, Cascade, Port of Spain, as the skipper was nectaring at flowers of moringa (*Moringa oleifera*, Moringaceae) at about 15.30-16.00 h on 9 February 2020 (Fig. 1). The image was shared, and rapidly identified as *Microceris dulcinea* (Plötz, 1879) by Olaf H.H. Mielke, and this was confirmed from the Butterflies of America website (Warren *et al.* 2017).

This species has not previously been recorded from Trinidad, although eight other species of the subfamily are known from the island (Cock 2014). It can be recognised as belonging to Pyrrhopyginae by the antennae, which are strongly clubbed, with most of the club in the bent over (reflexed) portion. The white border to the dorsal hindwing, the two pale lines down the thorax and the red dorsal collar between the head and the thorax are distinctive features, any of which would separate this species from other Pyrrhopyginae in Trinidad.

Microceris dulcinea was described from Colombia, and is known from Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia,

Venezuela, and Ecuador (Evans 1951, Freeman 1966, Mielke 1995, Orellana 2008, Warren *et al.* 2017). In Venezuela, it is reported from the lowlands of the north of the country (Miranda, Aragua, Guárico, Táchira), principally in deciduous forest (Orellana 2008), although there are also records from Trujillo and Bolivar (Mielke 1995).

Microceris dulcinea has been variously treated as a subspecies of *M. scylla* (Ménétriés) (Evans 1951), a valid species (Freeman 1966, Mielke 1995), a synonym of *E. scylla* (Burns and Janzen 2001), and back to a valid species (Mielke 2004, Ortellana 2008, Zhang *et al.* 2019). Until recently it was placed in the genus *Elbella*, but Zhang *et al.* (2019) synonymised *Elbella* with *Microceris*, and re-established Pyrrhopyginae as a subfamily rather than a tribe of Pyrginae as it had been in recent years (e.g. Cock 2014).

There is one food plant record from Venezuela: the introduced tropical almond, *Terminalia catappa* (Combretaceae) (Orellana 2008). The closely related *M. scylla* feeds on a selection of Malphigiaceae and Combretaceae (Burns and Janzen 2001, Janzen and Hallwachs 2020), and it is likely that *M. dulcinea* will have a similar food plant range. The caterpillar of *M. dulcinea* should resemble that of *P. amyclas amyclas* (Cramer) which also feeds on tropical almond in Trinidad (Cock 2008), so until distinguishing characters can be established, it would be necessary to rear any Pyrrhopyginae caterpillars from



Fig. 1. Adult *Microceris dulcinea*, a new skipper butterfly record for Trinidad.

this plant to establish their identity.

Hololo Mountain Road, where the picture was taken is a well collected area for butterflies, and it seems unlikely that this large distinctive species has hitherto been overlooked in this part of Trinidad. However, Orellana (2008) reports that it is primarily associated with dry broadleaf forest (bosque decíduo) in Venezuela, so *M. dulcinea* might be resident in the far northwest of Trinidad and/or the Bocas Islands. Alternatively, it could be a vagrant individual from Venezuela, or a species that has newly spread to Trinidad and become established. It will be interesting to see if further observations will follow.

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