

should be critically examined as two recorded in Orkney on 8 August 1969 coincided with other immigrant moths of suspected Scandinavian origin (Waring P. 2003. *op. cit.*).

Thanks are due to Robert M. Palmer for help with determining the Kincardineshire specimen, providing details of old records and commenting on a draft of the note, to Dr. Lauri Kaila for confirming the identification, Keith P Bland for providing references of published records and to Chris Harlow for taking digital photographs.— JEFF WADDELL, Bonavista, Heatheryett, Galashiels, Selkirkshire TD1 2JL (E-mail: jeff.waddell@ukf.net) and STEVE HUNT, 13 Venlaw Quarry Road, Peebles EH45 8RJ.

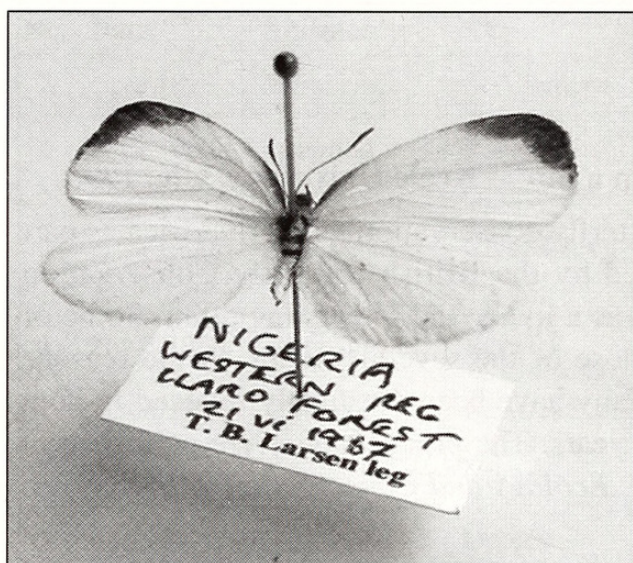
Hazards of butterfly collecting. 'Fossil on a pin' – Keele University, UK, 1993

In 1993 I was asked to give a paper on butterfly conservation needs in Africa as part of 25th anniversary symposium organized by the British Butterfly Conservation Society (BCS) at Keele University. This was a lively and interesting affair. Some of the most impressive presentations were those of the several studies on the reasons for the decline of butterflies in the UK. Many have been drastically reduced in both numbers and distribution over the past 50 years. The proceedings were published in an attractive book (Pullin, A. S. (ed). 1995. *Ecology and Conservation of Butterflies*. Chapman & Hall, UK).

The contrast between how much is known about so many of the few species of butterflies occurring in the United Kingdom and how little is known about most of the 4,000 species occurring in Africa could not have been more apparent. This also leads to some very different attitudes to the study and collecting of butterflies.

In the discussion following my talk, where I had emphasized habitat conservation as the over-riding issue in Africa, a member of the audience asked me about the collecting of butterflies – a potentially fraught topic amongst a large company of the august membership of Butterfly Conservation. I quoted a letter I had just received from a couple who had recently been to Yemen, one of my old haunts, and part of the Afrotropical Region: "We also saw a nymphalid that is not illustrated in any of your Arabian books and papers. We therefore knew it must be very rare and obviously we did not catch it." "When I get a letter like that", I said – beginning to make the motions of throttling someone with my bare hands – "I feel very, very frustrated". I was not very sure how this would go down, but as the audience gradually caught on to what my hands were illustrating, a gratifying murmur of laughter slowly rippled through the auditorium: "How are we going to think about butterfly conservation when we do not even know what we have got?" Here was an important opportunity missed through a thoroughly confused attitude to conservation. No harm could possibly be done by taking a few butterflies out of a place which had not seen a butterfly net since I was there in the 1980s. The benefit of a complete picture of Yemen's fauna for future conservation efforts is evident.

Actually the issue is even more critical than that. In most tropical parts of the world a butterfly or any other insect that is correctly labelled and placed in a safe collection may a few years from now be a "fossil on a pin". During the late 1960s I collected extensively in two interesting forests in western Nigeria, Ilaro and Olokemeji. They were the two forests closest to the Dahomey Gap, a tongue of savannah country stretching to the coast of Togo and Bénin, separating the West African fauna from that of Nigeria and Central Africa. I have hundreds of butterflies from there. All are now effectively "fossils" – the forests are gone ... not just degraded, but is no more - like Monty Python's parrot.



Near Ilaro Forest – in 1969 – I collected a most distinctive forest butterfly that was named *Euriphene kiki* Bernardi & Larsen, 1980. I went back to the locality to find some more ten years later, but no forest was left anywhere in the vicinity. None has been located in other collections. It now sits in the Paris Natural History Museum – a fossil on a pin that tells us at least something about an organism that has now most probably disappeared in nature. The inset photo shows an Ilaro instant fossil of a small

member of the curious African Lipteninae branch of the Lycaenidae. It belongs to the *Liptena alluaudi/albicans*-complex, which probably comprises four or more species between Côte d'Ivoire and western Nigeria that I still have not sorted out to my satisfaction. I have seen no Nigerian material from this group of species since the one figured was caught (I still remember a lovely picnic with my parents on 21 June 1967).

I am afraid that the welcome emphasis on conservation has had unwelcome side-effects. Collecting insects in most parts of the world has become increasingly difficult. Nowhere was this better illustrated than when we were living in the Philippines. A group of entomologists from a university in eastern Europe was trying to develop a molecular profile of different populations some dangerous groups of mosquitoes, especially those responsible for dengue fever. To my mind this was a most noble objective – my wife and I had just managed to contract dengue fever. It was a benign form, but we still wandered about our house for two weeks in a zombie-like condition. The intrepid team of researchers was taken to jail in handcuffs while working on Palawan ... they had tried to get formal permission to catch mosquitoes in the Philippines, but never had a reply from the Department of the Environment. Eventually they decided to 'just do it'. Their ambassador had to travel down from Jakarta to secure their release. They left behind 22 vials of dead mosquitoes in alcohol – which presumably now are in the 'black museum' of the environment department as a major triumph.

At the same time Manila was plastered with posters on how to kill as many mosquitoes as possible in dozens of ingenious ways. Newspaper cartoonists and editorial staff had a field day. Slap a mosquito while having dinner on your porch and the troops of the Department of Environment would arrest you. Tropical biodiversity might have a value that should go to country in question ... but a sense of proportion really is necessary as well!

My own attitude is clear. Any insect from a tropical country on a pin, in alcohol, or in papers, with good locality data is potentially an instant fossil of great value. But surely butterflies are different? So many collectors ... so much interest in rare species. I disagree. Virtually nothing is known about any African butterfly. Steve Collins and I have just described a new species called *Charaxes chevroti*, known only from the tiny, isolated Kagoro Forest in northern Nigeria, which may by now almost be destroyed. This is possibly one of the few insects in Africa that could reasonably be placed on a list of protected species – but to be honest, I would be prefer to see another specimen on a pin. The butterfly used to be quite common in the forest. If the forest has gone, so has the butterfly. If the forest survives, the butterfly will be just fine. Latest report from Kagoro are not encouraging. — TORBEN B. LARSEN, UNDP Vietnam, c/o Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland (E-mail: torbenlarsen@netnam.vn).

News on the conservation of some UK Biodiversity Action Plan moths in 2004

This article follows in the foot-steps of similar annual reviews since 2000 in which the author has reported on some species and projects with which he is personally involved to achieve the objectives and targets of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan – see *Ent. Rec* **113**: 121-129 (for 2000), **114**: 149-153 (for 2001) **115**: 213-219 (for 2002) & **116**: 134-137 (for 2003). For brevity only selected highlights and key results from 2004 are included. In every case the author is indebted to Writtle College for support in writing up these results in his post as Reader within the Centre for Environment and Rural Affairs at the College and in some cases for financial help in conducting aspects of the fieldwork. Other partners and colleagues are acknowledged within each section and I am most thankful to all of them. Private land-owners and some others are generally not named, for reasons of privacy and security, but their help is also greatly appreciated. Where indicated, the studies are part of Butterfly Conservation's Action for Threatened Moths Project, which is part funded by English Nature, and the author is indebted to nominated officers Mark Parsons (BC) and David Sheppard (EN) for helping to ensure continued funding. Other aspects of the Action for Threatened Moths Project are reported elsewhere, in particular in the *Lepidoptera Conservation Bulletin*, issued annually by BC, which continues the National Moth Conservation Project News Bulletin which the author started in 1987 and which ran to ten issues, the last in 1999.



Larsen, Torben B. 2005. "Hazards of butterfly collecting. 'Fossil on a pin' - Keele University, UK, 1993." *The entomologist's record and journal of variation* 117, 109–111.

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