

## **LIPTENA PRISCILLA A NEW LIPTENID BUTTERFLY FROM NIGERIA (LEPIDOPTERA: LYCAENIDAE)**

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### **Introduction**

A MOST CHARACTERISTIC new species of *Liptena* has been in the collection of Mr R.G.T. St. Leger for more than thirty years. During a recent visit to discuss preparatory work on my book on the butterflies of West Africa, he asked me to describe it and entrusted me with one of his two specimens to be dissected and placed in The Natural History Museum, London.

The species in question belongs to the *undularis*-subgroup of the very large genus *Liptena* (70 species or so), characterised by being white or cream and by having more or less developed parallel black bands on the hindwing underside. The group, together with the other white, cream, or ochreous members of the genus was comprehensively revised by Stempffer, Bennett & May (1974). They recognised three species: *L. undularis* Hewitson, 1860; *L. ferrymani* Grose-Smith & Kirby, 1891 (with ssp. *bigoti* Stempffer, 1964); and *L. septistrigata* Bethune-Baker, 1903. I have never seen *L. ferrymani bigoti*, but from the genitalia drawings in the revision paper, it may well be a distinct species. There are also ochreous species with similar underside patterns.

The genitalia of the new species come closest to those of *L. ferrymani bigoti*, but they are quite distinctive. The species is recognisable at a glance by the much wider dark bands on the hindwing underside and by the colour of the dark markings which are light chocolate rather than blackish-brown.

The purpose of this paper is to describe this interesting new species and to place it in context with closely related species.

### ***Liptena priscilla* sp. nov.**

**Male upperside:** (Fig. 1) Forewing 18.5mm. The ground-colour is off-white and the dark markings are light chocolate-brown. Other similar species are purer white with darker brown markings. The forewing has slight chocolate basal shading. The costa is narrowly chocolate to the end of the cell, where there are traces of dark markings, not a prominent tooth as in *L. ferrymani*. The relatively large chocolate apical patch has an inner edge that consists of a series of steps, forming an angle of 90° along the veins as follows: the width is 6mm from the costa to vein 6; in spaces 4 and 5 the width is 4mm; in space 3 the width is 2mm; in space 2 it is also 2mm, but incomplete. Spaces 1a and 1b have no black margins. The hindwing has a linear dark margin, lighter brown than the markings of the forewing. The underside pattern is just visible due to transparency.

**Male underside:** (Fig. 1) The dark markings on the underside are lighter chocolate than on the upperside. The light areas of the forewing apex and of



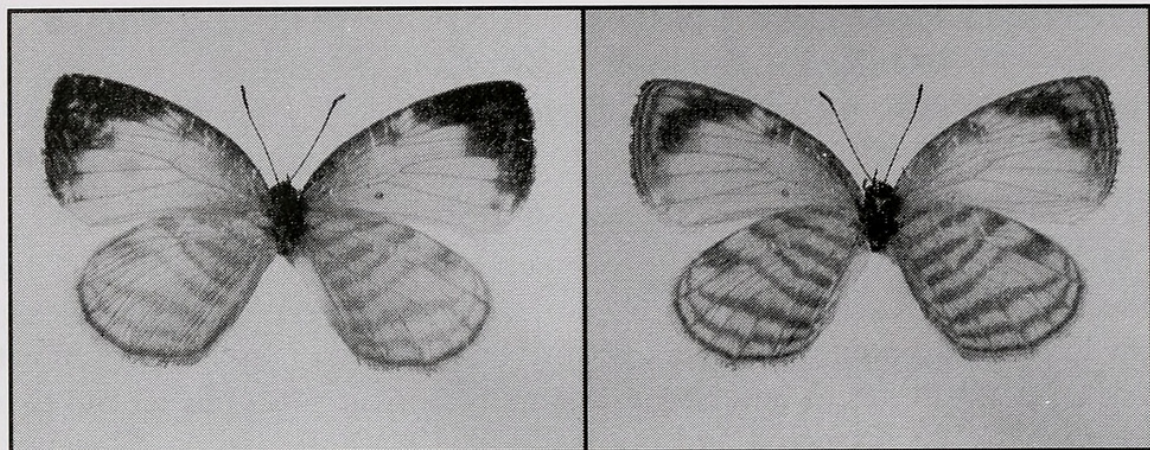


Fig. 1. Male upperside (left) and underside (right) of the *Liptena priscilla* holotype (slightly larger than life).

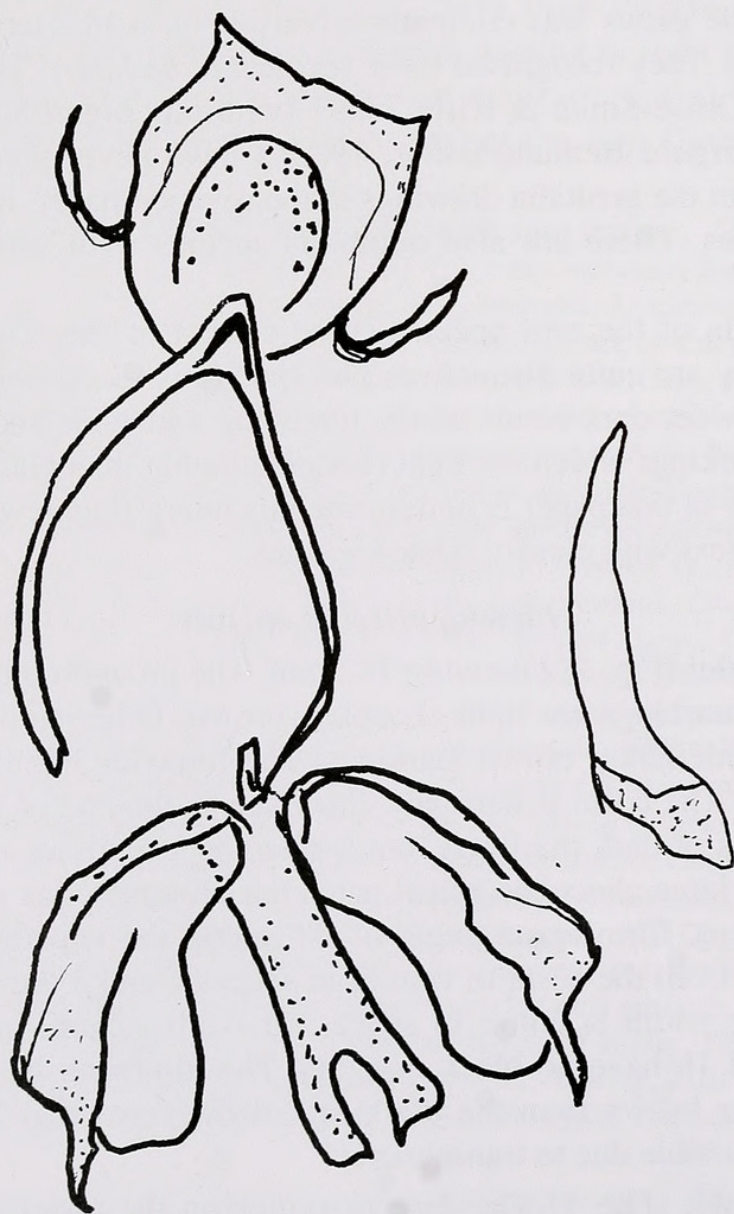


Fig. 2. The male genitalia of the *Liptena priscilla* holotype.



the entire hindwing are cream, the basal and discal area of the forewing being off-white. The basal third of the forewing costa is brown, with hardly any tooth at the end of the cell. Just after the cell the costa is almost white for 2mm, till the apical patch begins. This patch is much smaller than on the upperside. There is a row of cream apical spots as well as an additional fine cream submarginal line. The hindwing has seven almost parallel chocolate lines, distinctly wider than in the other members of the group. The fifth of these lines is broken just before a wider dark spot on the costa. There is also a fine chocolate marginal border.

**Male genitalia:** The male genitalia (fig. 2) have the typical configuration of the genus, and valves that are allied to those of many members of the group revised by Stempffer, Bennett and May (1974). They may, however, be recognised at a glance by the deeply bifid saccus. The uncus is broad, with a small central depression. The outer lobes of the uncus are drawn out to a point, a feature occurring in few other members of the genus. The recurved subuncus are small and frail, with a slight swelling before the tip. The tegumen is very narrowly and loosely attached to the vinculum. The inner lobe of the valve is much more massive than in *L. ferrymani bigoti* and the outer, more heavily chitinized lobe is almost straight. The broad saccus is almost as long as the valves. Its distal end is deeply bifid, more so than I have seen in any other *Liptena* (only in *L. batesana* Bethune-Baker, 1926 is there a slight tendency to being bifid).

**Male holotype:** Obudu Plateau, 7.iii.1962 (R.G.T. St. Leger leg., coll. Natural History Museum, London) (genitalia no. 29358 – ex Larsen no. BBD).

**Paratype:** one male, same data (coll. R.G.T. St. Leger).

The species is dedicated to Mrs Priscilla St. Leger in appreciation of her hospitality to the many entomologists who have come to benefit from her husband's unrivalled knowledge of the butterflies from the area of Nigeria from which she hails.

### Discussion

*Liptena priscilla* was caught in forest on the Obudu Plateau, one of the few areas of Nigeria which can be described as montane. Many interesting butterflies have been found there. The larger species were reviewed in a special paper (St. Leger 1965), and additional information on the montane zone in Nigeria on the Mambilla Plateau is given by Dowsett *et al.* (1989).

The Nigerian montane zones are outliers of the much larger Cameroun Mountains. Their specifically montane butterfly fauna (some 40 species) has been discussed by Libert (1991); the species number is relatively low and very few are endemic to the Cameroun Mountains even at subspecific level.

Though collected at montane levels on the Obudu Plateau, it is unlikely that *L. priscilla* is limited to montane levels. No members of the Lipteninae elsewhere in Africa seem to be strictly montane. There are, however, many



species with limited distributions, and the Cameroun-Nigeria border region and western Cameroun contain numerous endemic species. It is therefore likely that *L. priscilla* will be found also in Cameroun. It must be very local and scarce.

The closest relative of the new species, *L. ferrymani*, has quite different ecological preferences. It is one of the few West African Lipteninae found in the Guinea savannah zone; most of the material in The Natural History Museum, London is from as far north as Kaduna. *L. septistrigata*, however, is much more of a forest species.

### Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Mr R.G.T. St. Leger for allowing me to describe the new species in this paper, which is no. 12 resulting from preparatory work for the book *Butterflies of West Africa – origins, natural history, diversity, and conservation*. The Carlsberg Foundation in Denmark supports my own field work, for which I am most grateful. I also wish to thank The Natural History Museum, London, and especially Messrs P. Ackery and C.R. Smith for their help and co-operation. The library of the Royal Entomological Society, London, and the assistance of the librarian, Ms Jacqueline Ruffle is also invaluable.

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### *Euchmichtis lichenea lichenea* (Hb.) Feathered Ranunculus (Lep.: Noctuidae) in north-east Hampshire

At about 10pm on 8th October 1994 a male specimen of *Euchmichtis lichenea lichenea* flew to light at the cottage here in Selborne. This occurrence in north-east Hampshire would seem to represent an extension of *lichenea*'s previously published range in the south and north-west of the county.

**References:** Bernard Skinner & David Wilson, 1984. *Colour Identification Guide to Moths of the British Isles* Viking, Harmondsworth; Heath, J. & Emmet, A.M. (eds.), 1983. *The Moths and Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland* **10** Harley Books, Colchester; Goater, B., 1974. *The Butterflies & Moths of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight*, E.W. Classey, Faringdon; Goater, B., 1992. *The Butterflies and Moths of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight: additions and corrections*, Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough.

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