

**Remarks on the relationships
of the Butterflies (excluding Skippers)
of the Cayman Islands**

By HARRY K. CLENCH
Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh, Penna.

Carpenter & Lewis (1943) have given a report on the extensive collection of butterflies made by the Oxford University Biological Expedition to the Cayman Islands in 1938, and their list serves as the basis for these comments, supplemented by collateral information from various sources. The HesperIIDae are necessarily omitted from the discussion here: there are too many points of uncertainty on distribution and subspeciation.

The Cayman Islands butterflies are overwhelmingly Cuban in their affinities. With one exception only every species found in the Caymans occurs also in Cuba and among these are several that are absent from Jamaica, Hispaniola and the islands to the east. In those species that occur both on Cuba and on other islands, but as distinctive subspecies, it is the Cuban subspecies that is found in the Caymans.

The single non-Cuban species is the endemic lycaenid, *Hemiargus* (*Cyclargus*) *erembis* Nabokov (1948). It is closely related to *H. (C.) thomasi* Clench, which occurs in Hispaniola, the Bahamas and southern Florida, but is not known from Cuba. Possibly (as Nabokov suggests) *erembis* may eventually be found in Cuba; or it may once have occurred there and is now extinct.

There is no evidence of a particular relationship between the Cayman fauna and that of Jamaica. Many of the Cayman butterflies are shared with Jamaica, but these are all widely distributed Antillean species and all occur on Cuba as well.

Lewis (*in* Carpenter & Lewis 1943: 396) thought he could discern some evidence of mainland (Mexican and Central American) affinities, but this seems to be better explained otherwise. The species (or, in some cases, subspecies) which

the Cayman Islands share with the mainland are all found in identical form on Cuba; and in those species in which the mainland subspecies is distinct from the one or ones found in the Antilles it is again the Cuban form which is found in the Caymans. This supposed mainland relationship thus seems to be simply a further reflection of Cuban affinity.

Endemism in the Caymans is surprisingly slight for islands so isolated. Of the 32 known species of Cayman Islands butterflies only two show endemism: *Papilio andraemon* Hübner and *Hemiargus erembis* Nabokov. The first has an endemic subspecies (*tailori* Rothschild & Jordan) on Grand Cayman, but the nominate (Cuban) subspecies occurs on Little Cayman and Cayman Brac. *H. erembis* is an endemic species and is discussed above. There are several species in the Caymans that are known to exhibit extensive subspeciation elsewhere in the West Indies, though the characters differentiating these subspecies are often slight and not evident to casual examination. It is possible that careful study of Cayman material of these species will reveal additional subspecies endemic to the islands.

REFERENCES

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