

## A mixed butterfly migration in the Nairobi area of Kenya

(Lepidoptera)

by

TORBEN B. LARSEN

Received: 5.III.1985

As I touched down at 14.00 on 15.XII.1984 at Nairobi Jomo Kenyatta airport in an old Fokker Friendship coming from Kampala, it became evident as we were taxiing in that a significant butterfly migration was in progress. Most prominent were *Catopsilia florella* F.

Between 16.18 and 16.37 in central Nairobi I did a quick check on the magnitude and composition of the migration. I observed a 100 metre front in an open space where Harambee Avenue joins Uhuru Highway. The butterflies were flying almost straight along Harambee, crossing the Uhuru Highway at almost right angles towards the west (WSW). There was a strong tailwind, slightly from the right, and the ground speed of the butterflies was a fast 20-25 kilometres. The behaviour of the migrants was the usual one, but some individuals travelled at 15 metres or more above the ground, perhaps because they had just traversed the centre of Nairobi with all its skyscrapers.

During the 19 minutes of observing a 100 metre front, 95 migrant butterflies were observed, or just over four per minute on average. Of these, 81 were *Catopsilia florella* F. Nearly all the females were of the yellow morph, more so than normally observed in Africa. The following day five females were collected for dissection on arrival in Denmark. None contained fully formed eggs. Seven *Junonia hierta cebrenne* TRIMEN were observed as migrants, despite the fact that the observations were made in the midst of a resident population of this species. A few *Papilio demodocus* ESPER were also seen, and records of active migration in this species are rather scarce. Single specimens of *Phalanta phalantha aethiopica* R.& J. and of *Eurema hecabe* L. were also seen, as were two Lycaenid specimens.

The following day between 10.00 and 15.00 I drove north from Nairobi for some 30 km with STEVE COLLINS in indifferent weather. However, when the sun was out, the same general picture prevailed, and the presence of *P. phalantha* and *E. hecabe* as genuine migrants was confirmed, as was *P. demodocus*. Apparently the pattern had been the same for several days before my arrival in Nairobi.

By the standards of WILLIAMS (1930), the migration must be classified as very thin. It was, however, so definite that my non-entomological travel companions had no problems accepting it as such, though they might not have noticed it spontaneously. Nonetheless, the numbers involved are still impressive. The total front must have been at least 40 kilometres, the duration at least three days of seven

**Atalanta (April 1985) 16: 105-108, Würzburg, ISSN 0171-0079**

---

hours or so. This would give a minimum estimate of 400 (40 km divided by 100m) x 3 days x 7 hours x 60 minutes x 4 per minute, for a total of just over 2.000.000.

There is apparently a fair amount of migratory activity in December in Nairobi, coinciding with the short rains, though it is not well documented. None of the migrations documented by WILLIAMS et al. (1942) were from December. Curiously, my only previous record from Kenya is a huge migration of exclusively *Amaphaeis aurota* F. moving towards the southeast on 12.XII.1975 (LARSEN, 1977).

References:

- LARSEN, T.B. (1977): A migration of *Anaphaeis aurota* F. in Kenya. Dtsch. Ent. Z. 24: 419-422.  
WILLIAMS, C.B. (1930): Migration of butterflies. - Edinburgh.  
WILLIAMS, C.B. et al. (1942): Studies in the migration of butterflies. Trans. R. ent. Soc. London 92: 101-283.

Author's address:

Dr. TORBEN B. LARSEN  
c/o DANIDA  
Royal Danish Embassy  
7 Golf Links  
New Delhi 110003  
India

**Zur Biologie von *Anthocharis damone* (BOISDUVAL, 1836)  
und *Anthocharis gruneri* (HERRICH-SCHÄFFER, 1851)**

(Lep., Pieridae)

von

WERNER BACK

Eingegangen am 1.III.1985

**1. *Anthocharis damone***

*Anthocharis damone* ist sehr lokal verbreitet und kommt laut HIGGINS & RILEY (1970) in Süditalien und Sizilien sowie in Griechenland, Syrien bis Persien vor. Die Art ist ebenso von verschiedenen Plätzen in Mazedonien, im Libanon und in Israel bekannt. Die nachfolgende Beschreibung der Raupe und Puppe basiert auf Zuchten

# ZOBODAT - [www.zobodat.at](http://www.zobodat.at)

Zoologisch-Botanische Datenbank/Zoological-Botanical Database

Digitale Literatur/Digital Literature

Zeitschrift/Journal: [Atalanta](#)

Jahr/Year: 1985

Band/Volume: [16](#)

Autor(en)/Author(s): Larsen Torben B.

Artikel/Article: [A mixed butterfly migration in the Nairobi area of Kenya \(Lepidoptera\) 104-105](#)