

Aricia crassipuncta bassoni Larsen, 1974 from Lebanon raised to species rank (Lepidoptera, Lycaenidae)

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Summary

A reexamination of material of *Aricia crassipuncta bassoni* Larsen, 1974 from Lebanon shows that it differs from *A. vandarbani* Pfeiffer, 1937 from Iran, with which it had been synonymised, and also from *A. anteros* Freyer, 1838 [Turkey] and *A. crassipuncta* Christoph, 1893 [Armenia]. The differences are to be found in wing pattern and shape, and in the male genitalia. The taxon is therefore raised to species rank.

Résumé

Le réexamen de matériel d'*Aricia crassipuncta bassoni* Larsen, 1974 du Liban, montre qu'il diffère de *A. vandarbani* Pfeiffer, 1937 d'Iran, avec lequel il avait été synonymisé, et également d'*A. anteros* Freyer, 1838 (Turquie) et d'*A. crassipuncta* Christoph, 1893 (Arménie). Les différences sont à trouver dans les dessins et les formes des ailes, ainsi que dans les genitalia mâles. Le taxon est en conséquence élevé au rang d'espèce.

In 1974, I described the taxon *Aricia crassipuncta bassoni* from the high mountains of Lebanon. It belongs in the subgenus *Ultraaricia* Beuret, 1959, a small group of species characterized by the presence of an unusual inferior lobe in the uncus. On the advice of Dr. Burkhardt Alberti and Dr. Walther Forster, I allied the Lebanese taxon with *A. crassipuncta* Christoph, 1893 from Armenia, despite their being separated by a distance of more than a thousand kilometres. I was encouraged to do this also because the Lebanese population was traditionally referred to tentatively as ssp. *crassipuncta* of *Aricia anteros* Freyer, 1838.

In a paper in this journal, NEKRUTENKO (1980) placed the taxon *bassoni* as a synonym of *A. vandarbani* Pfeiffer, 1937 from the Iranian Elburs Mountains on morphological grounds, though he also said it might possibly be a valid subspecies thereof. K. Schurian (pers. comm.), to

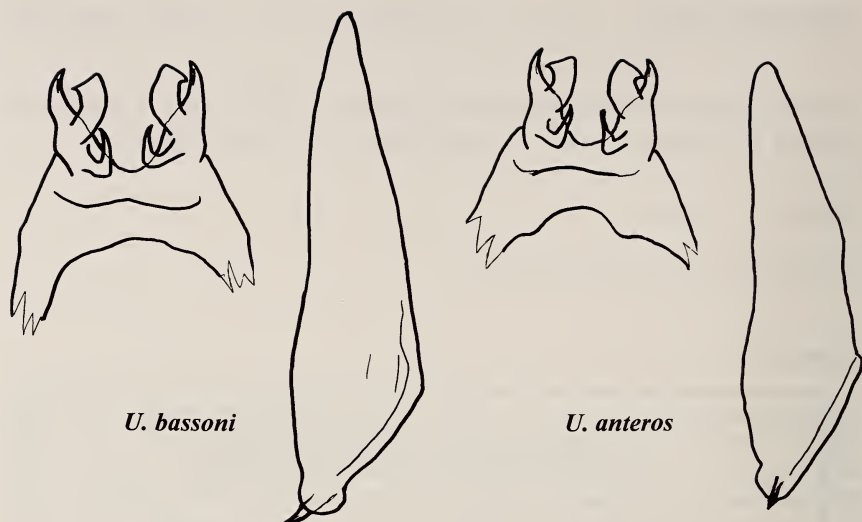


Fig. 1. Uncus and valves of *Ultraaricia* spp. : *U. bassoni* from Lebanon (Larsen prep. LAI) ; *U. anteros* from Anatolia (Ankara area) (Larsen prep. LAJ).

whom I gave some specimens, did not agree with this decision, and I had for long wanted to re-examine the issue.

After many years, I recently regained access to my genitalia mounts from Lebanon. Examination of a male *bassoni* shows that the specialized inferior lobe of the uncus is exactly like that of a male *A. anteros* from near Ankara (Fig. 1). Since the main characteristic of *A. vandarbani* is a strong reduction of this lobe, the assignment of *bassoni* to *A. vandarbani* clearly becomes impossible (no material of *bassoni* was available to Nekrutenko).

On the other hand, Nekrutenko's redescription of *A. crassipuncta*, a poorly known species, makes it clear that it differs more from *bassoni* than I thought in 1974. *A. crassipuncta* has very pointed forewings, the underside pattern is less strongly developed, the wings almost wholly lack orange marginal lunules, and the overlay of light scales is blueish-grey rather than greenish. To this must now be added that the valve of *bassoni* is proportionately longer than in the other three species, and the distal spine is long, jutting well beyond the distal end of the valve. The length of the valve is due to elongation of the basal part, the distal half having the usual proportions. I therefore raise *Aricia* (*Ultraaricia*) *crassipuncta bassoni* Larsen, 1974 to species rank (**stat.**

n.). This also seems the most reasonable solution on biogeographical grounds.

Males of *A. bassoni* (illustrated in colour by LARSEN, 1974) are readily recognized by the grey upperside with a strong, greenish sheen, usually with well developed marginal orange lunules. They are very different from the smaller blue Anatolian males. Females are like those of *Aricia agestis* Denis & Schiffermüller, 1775 with strongly developed marginal lunules. The haploid chromosome number is $n = 23$ (LARSEN, 1975), which has also been found in nominate *A. anteros*, and which appears to be typical for the genus. HIGGINS (1975) quotes $n = 24$ for *A. agestis*, but I found Lebanese males to have $n = 23$.

There are also occasional records of *A. crassipuncta* from southwestern Turkey (HIGGINS, 1966 ; NEKRUTENKO, 1980). It is thus possible that a population of *A. bassoni* exists in the Taurus Mountains, with which the Lebanese butterfly fauna has many other affinities, but I have not seen material from there.

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