

Lindenbergia indica (Scrophulariaceae) a newly-recorded foodplant for the Blue Pansy butterfly *Junonia orithya* here in Arabia (Lepidoptera: Nymphalidae)

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Butterflies belonging to the family Nymphalidae are few in numbers of species in the United Arab Emirates and northern Oman and, whilst conspicuous, make up only about 15 % of the total number of species found in the region. They include a single member of the subfamily Danaeinae (*Danaus chrysippus chrysippus*), four of Nymphalinae (Painted Lady - *Vanessa cardui*, Blue Pansy - *Junonia orithya* here, Yellow Pansy - *J. hierta cebrene* and Diadem - *Hypolimnas misippus*) and three of Satyrinae (*Ypthima asterope asterope*, *Y. bolanica* and *Hipparchia parisatis*) (Gillett, 1995).

The three satyrines are all more or less sedentary butterflies feeding on various grasses in oases or mountain wadis. However, all of the other local members of the family are migratory and they appear sporadically, produce one or more local broods of offspring, and then disappear again until their next invasion. Their success in establishing themselves temporarily within this region depends very much upon their powers of adaptation and choice of larval foodplants.

In October and November 2003, wadis in the Hajar Mountains adjacent to Al Ain contained large numbers of *V. cardui* and *J. orithya* here together with smaller numbers of *J. hierta cebrene*, but only *V. cardui* was present in Al Ain City.

Surveys were conducted in three wadis (Khadrah, A'bul and Khutwah), in an attempt to identify larval food-plants for these three species of Nymphalinae. Larvae of the Painted Lady and the Blue Pansy were found, but not those of the Yellow Pansy. In all three wadis, Painted Lady larvae were found on plants of *Forsskaolea tenacissima* (Urticaceae) in plantations and open fields. Some were taken back to Al Ain and reared on the same plants - the adults hatched in early December and were released. This larval foodplant has previously been recorded in Oman for the Painted Lady (Larsen, 1983). Blue Pansy caterpillars were found only in Wadi Khutwah on plants of *Lindenbergia indica* (Scrophulariaceae) (Jongbloed, 2003) growing in damp spots caused by seepage from the *falaj* (see above). Larvae of all

stages were present with a total of about 20 individuals. Several were reared to adulthood and hatched in mid-December, thus confirming their identification. This is a newly recorded food-plant for the Blue Pansy.

In Africa, various members of the Lamiaceae (formerly Labiatae) are used, but in Arabia, the family Acanthaceae seems to be preferred. For instance, in SW Arabia, species of *Barleria* have been recorded, but this genus is absent from the UAE and N. Oman. Other Arabian records, however, are for widely different plants, including *Phyla nodiflora* (Verbeniaceae), *Plantago amplicaulis* (Plantaginaceae) and *Kickxia* species (Scrophulariaceae) (Larsen, 1983). Several *Kickxia* species, which are related to *Lindenbergia indica*, grow in the Hajar Mountains, but they are scarce and none were found during the caterpillar survey.

References

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Tribulus 16.1 Spring/Summer 2006