

A NEW RECORD OF THE BUTTERFLY *DODONIDIA HELMSI* (Fereday) FOR THE WELLINGTON DISTRICT

TONY WHITAKER, .

Department of Zoology, Victoria University, Wellington.

Hudson records *Dodonidia helmsi* from the Tararuas, Silverstream, and the Eastern Harbour. This is a record of the capture of two specimens of this butterfly in Whiteman's Valley in February, 1963.

On February 2nd the first specimen was caught as it flew along a track at the head of the Mangaroa Swamp. It was a hot still day and the time was about 1 p.m. The bush in this locality was originally hard beech, *Nothofagus truncata* (Colenso), but has been milled recently and now consists mainly of dense regrowth (Kamahi, *Weinmannia racemosa* (Linné), Fivefinger, *Neopanax arboreum* (Murray) etc.) with a few remaining beech trees. The area has an easterly aspect and is shaded for a greater part of the day. The butterfly was first seen hovering in a patch of sunlight about 8 ft from the ground and occasionally alighting on sunlit leaves nearby. It was on one of these leaves, about 5 ft from the ground, that the butterfly was caught.

The second specimen was captured on February 8th about half a mile south of the Blue Mountains settlement, Whiteman's Valley, on a westerly aspect. The bush here has also been *Nothofagus truncata* as in the first case, although all that remains now is Manuka (*Leptospermum* sp. (Forster)) scrub and isolated patches of beech. The butterfly was feeding on ornamental daisies in a garden about 10 yards from the scrub. The time of capture was approximately 5.30 p.m.; the area was still in the sun and there was no wind blowing.

Both specimens were identified as *Dodonidia helmsi* from Hudson and my identification was confirmed by Professor Salmon at Victoria University. Both insects were believed to be females. Hudson states that the caterpillars feed on the sedge *Gahnia setifolia* (Hooker f.) and although sedges of this genus are present in both localities no caterpillars or eggs were found in spite of a special search.

The fact that the two localities are about 1 mile apart and separated by an 800 ft hill indicates that these butterflies may be fairly widespread in this district, although no record appears to have been made since 1928.

REFERENCES

- FEREDAY, R. W., 1883: Description of a Butterfly new to N.Z. and probably to Science. *Trans. N.Z. Inst.* 15: 193.
HUDSON, G. V., 1928: The Butterflies and Moths of New Zealand, 1939: Supplement to Butterflies and Moths of New Zealand.