

# RECORDS OF THE ARCTIID GENUS *UTETHEISA* IN NEW ZEALAND

D. C. F. PERROTT,

Entomology Division, D.S.I.R., Nelson.

The first record of a representative of the genus *Utetheisa* in New Zealand is that of Meyrick (1890) who noted it as *Deiopeia pulchella* L. from Wainuiomata and considered it to be an occasional migrant. In 1904 Hutton listed *U. pulchella* among insect species which are ". . . . introduced . . . . and have become so well established that they may be considered part of the fauna." Thomson (1922) gave a list of places where *U. pulchella* had been noted. They are Petone, Tihai Bay ("in considerable numbers"), Dunedin and the bed of the Waitaki River near Oamaru ("a swarm"). Tillyard (1926) recorded *U. pulchella* as being present in Australia and the North Island of New Zealand. Other localities recorded by Hudson (1928) are Auckland and Thames. He gives *Myosotis* as the host plant and returned the species to migrant status. Finally, Wise, (1956) recorded a male taken in November 1955 as *U. pulchelloides vaga* Jordan, "an immigrant species."

Table 1 gives additional records gained from mercury vapour light traps. The traps were all established in apple orchards in the Nelson district excepting those at Opouri and Pretty Bridge Valley where they were in open pasture. Data for specimens in other collections are given in Table 2.

TABLE 1

### Light trap records of *Utetheisa pulchelloides*

Riwaka 29.i.57 (1 ♀, 1 ♂); Appleby 4.ii.57 (1 ♂); 7.iii.57 (1 ♂); Mahana 29.i.58 ( ), 21.ii.58 (1 ♂), 28.iii.58 (1), 27.x.58 (♂), Mariri 19.iii.59 (1), Appleby 5.iv.59 (1 ♂), 9.iii.60 (1 ♂), Pretty Valley Bridge 9.ii.63 (1 ♀), Opouri Valley 15.xi.65 (1 ♀, 1 ♂).

TABLE 2

### Specimens of *Utetheisa* in other collections in New Zealand

Plant Diseases Division, D.S.I.R., Auckland: Henderson 11.xi.55 (1 ♂), Mt. Albert 13.vi.63.

Auckland Museum: Dargaville 4.i.56 (1 ♀), Manurewa 7.ii.56 (1 ♀), Takapuna 27.iii.56 (1 ♂), unlabelled (1 ♀).

Dominon Museum: Titahi Bay 1.ii.10 (4 ♀, 1 ♂), unlabelled (2 ♀) Howes collection.

Canterbury Museum: Unlabelled (2 ♀) Campbell collection.

Entomology Division, D.S.I.R., Nelson: Nelson 30.iv.56 (1 ♀), Westport 4.iv.56 (1 ♂).

The determination of New Zealand material as *U. pulchelloides vaga* by Jordan (1939) and quoted by Hudson (1950) appears to have been based on a single female collected before 1890. One other specimen of *Utetheisa* from New Zealand available to him

was placed as *U. lotrix lotrix* Cramer.. The characters used by Jordan (1939) place the present material as *U. pulchelloides* Hamps. but as which of the eight subspecies he retained is uncertain.

With the possible exception of those from Otago (for which no specimens appear to exist), all records of actual specimens listed here can reasonably be attributed to migration. The total of fifteen specimens taken from light traps is spread over six months of the year and were taken from the same number of sites suggesting that, if these insects did originate outside New Zealand, the actual number making landfall must be considerable. The frequency of specimens dating from 1956 may be compared with the records for *Hypolimnas bolina nerina* (F.) compiled by Ramsay and Ordish (1966) who draw attention to the weather conditions which were generally favourable for a successful crossing from Australia in that year.

The alternative explanation is that the species is established here. In either case it seems surprising that such a distinctive insect has not been recorded more frequently.

The recorded host plants of *Utetheisa* larvae elsewhere are among the Boraginaceae. This plant family is well represented here both in the native flora and by introduced weeds and cultivated plants. Scarcity of larval food would therefore be unlikely to prevent establishment but until records extend beyond occasional examples of the adult stage the migrant status of this species should be retained.

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