

MIGRANT LEPIDOPTERA IN NEW ZEALAND

1972 - 1973

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Migrant records this season were sparse in the spring, but abundant from mid-March through to early May coinciding with a long period of north-west to westerly gales. The tropical army worm and serious pest **Spodoptera litura**, was rather alarmingly common during this period, and there were further large invasions of the greasy cutworm **Agrotis ypsilon aneituma** in mid-March. These notes also include late records of immigrants in the 1971-72 season.

Cynthia kershawi (McCoy) (Nymphalidae)

This species was reasonably common in the Orongorongo Valley near Wellington at the end of the 1971-72 season: 28.1.72 (1), 7.2.72 (2), 8.2.72 (2), 16.2.72 (1), 23.2.72 (7), 6.3.72 (1), 14.3.72 (5) M. J. Meads.

It has been recorded this season commonly at Knuckle Hill, Westhaven Inlet during February 1973 by C. A. Fleming and I. Townsend.

Melanitis leda bankia (Fabricius) (Nymphalidae)

One specimen of the wet-season form of this species was captured at Houhora, north of Kaitaia by A. H. Whitaker on 7.5.72 after several days of strong north-west winds.

This is only the second record of this species in New Zealand—the first being at Oakura, Taranaki, on 13.4.62.

Hypolimnas bolina nerina (F.) (Nymphalidae)

As well as being found in Auckland and Taranaki at the end of April and May 1972 it was also found in the Wellington district: Lower Hutt 29.4.72 (1); Orongorongo Valley 1.5.72 (1); Upper Hutt 5.5.72 (1) M. J. Meads.

This season there has only been one very early record: Rotorua, 15.11.72 (1), R. W. Jackson.

Lampides boeticus (L.)

This species seems to be established in New Plymouth, Waiheke Island and elsewhere. (See Harding this issue).

Danaus chrysippus petilia (Stoll) (Nymphalidae)

On 9.2.73 two last instar larvae were found on swan plants (*Asclepias*) in Rotorua. They pupated forthwith and emerged some two weeks later. (M. Nuttall).

I have seen this species on the wing after heavy frosts in Southern Queensland, and yet it does not seem to become established in New Zealand although its foodplant abounds.

Utetheisa puchelloides vaga (Jordan) (Arctiidae)

After a very large invasion of this species in the 1971-72 season there have not been many records this season. The breeding colony noted by Gibbs in the Wairarapa seems to have died out. This species survives the Australian winter, with its heavy frosts, in the adult state and it is strange that it does not become established here.

There are some records from late last season (see Fox 1973) and several from early this season, but as strong north-westerly winds were prevailing at the time it is difficult to know whether they were progeny of the 1972-73 invasion or fresh immigrants.

Detailed records: Kaupokonui Beach 27.4.72 (2), Manaia 6.5.72 (1), 24.10.72 (2), 26.10.72 (1) K. J. Fox; Opunake 19.1.72 (1), 21.10.72 (1) F. Chambers.

Helicoverpa punctigera (Wollengren) (Noctuidae)

There have been many records of this species in Taranaki, often in the absence of strong winds, and although I have not found the larvae I feel that this species is probably now established here.

Records are: Manaia 13.11.72 (1), 17.12.72 (1), 26.2.73 (2), 27.2.73 (1), 6.3.73 (2), 9.3.73 (2), 10.3.73 (2), 14.3.73 (1),

16.3.73 (1), 8.4.73 (1); New Plymouth 28.2.73 (1) K. J. Fox.
Spodoptera litura (Fabr.) (Noctuidae)

This tropical army worm was fairly abundant in the autumn during and after prolonged periods of warm north-westerly winds.

Detailed records: Manaia 9.3.73 (1), 15.3.73 (1), 25.4.73 (1), 27.4.73 (4), 28.4.73 (3), 4.5.73 (1) K. J. Fox; Paraparamu 11.3.73 (1) M. E. Pickering.

This was the largest invasion that has been recorded. It would be highly undesirable for this pest to become established here.

Spodoptera exempta (Walker) (Noctuidae)

One specimen of this other tropical army worm was caught in Manaia on 16.3.73 at the same time as many other migrant species were recorded.

Dasypodia cymatoides Guenee, (Noctuidae)

Two specimens were caught in Manaia on 10.3.73 and 15.3.73 along with other migrant species.

Plusia oxygramma (Hubn.) (Noctuidae)

There are two records of this species in mid-March when most of the migrant records this season were obtained: Nelson 15.3.73 (1 fertile female) I. Catesby; Manaia 14.3.73 (1) K. J. Fox.

Achaea janata (Linn.) (Noctuidae, Catocalinae)

Three records of larvae were reported feeding on **Ricinus communis** between the 10th and 18th April, 1972, by P. S. Dale in the Auckland district. They were near pupation and one adult emerged on 15.5.72.

This species may well be established in the north.

Hymenia fascialis (Fab.) (Pyralidae)

This species is of sporadic appearance on the west coast of New Zealand and feeds on melons and pumpkins (Cucurbitaceae) in gardens. However, it is apparent that on occasions there are large invasions from Australia. This year it appeared in large numbers in mid-March at the same time as other migrant records. It was seen commonly on Boulder Bank, Farewell Spit, by J. S. Dugdale, and no less than thirty-seven specimens were caught in a light trap at Paraparamu on 17.3.73 by M. E. Pickering. It was common in the Paraparamu district for the next week.

CONCLUSION

The invasion of New Zealand by Lepidoptera from across the Tasman continues on frequent occasions. Some of these species seem to be getting established here, and some species that have already colonised New Zealand have their numbers augmented by invasions from time to time. It would appear that if our climate becomes generally warmer many more species could become established here.

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- FOX, K. J., 1973: Migrant Lepidoptera in New Zealand 1971-72. **N.Z. Ent. 5** (2): 143-146.
- GIBBS, G. W., 1973: **Utetheisa pulchelloides** (Arctiidae) breeding in N.Z. **N.Z. Ent. 5** (2): 162-163.