

## ESPECIALLY FOR FIELD COLLECTORS

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### A MALTESE LEPIDOPTERIST IN THE U. S. A.

by ANTHONY VALLETTA

Dreams, sometimes, do come true! When I joined the Lepidopterists' Society some ten years ago, I never thought that one day I would be fortunate enough to meet some of its members and to see their wonderful collections; neither did I think that I would see on the wing the butterflies I read about from time to time in the Society's *Journal* nor that I would have the chance to net a few myself; however as all "brothers of the net" can vouch, occasionally, collectors have queer dreams, such as running after butterflies or other insects in far off lands. I am no exception, and after reading some interesting collecting adventure in the journal, I dreamt that I was in the States, chasing butterflies, and enjoyed the fantastic nightmare hunt, only to be disappointed when I woke up.

But such dreams came true on September 3rd, 1959, when as a participant in the International Teacher Development Program which is part of the Educational Exchange Program sponsored by the U. S. Department of State, I arrived in Washington, D. C., to spend a happy and busy period of six months together with 272 other educators from 72 different countries. It was the eve of Independence Day when Mr. RUSSELL L. RILEY, the American consul general in Malta, rang me up to break the good news and to congratulate me on my selection to go to the States and to invite me to participate in the local American celebrations the next day. The following days were hectic ones for me, as I had to prepare a lot for this long trip, and at the same time to carry on with my office work.

Naturally, my mission in America was in the field of education; however time is found for a little bit of everything. As a naturalist, I made it a point to study also the flora and fauna in my spare time, if any, giving special attention to the Lepidoptera, and therefore I did not forget to put in one of the baggages the net, a killing bottle, a few nesting boxes and above all, the list of the members of the Lepidopterists' Society.

Unluckily, I could not do much in this field as I had to spend the fall term on the chilly shores of Lake Michigan, in Evanston and Chicago, and again, the winter months in California were hopeless, but still I made the best of it and got all the possible fun from my normal work. ✓

My plane left Malta exactly at mid-day on September 2nd. The first stop was at Ajaccio in Corsica; it was pouring as we got there, and the hour stop was spent under cover sipping a glass of Corsican wine. When it was time to board the plane again, the pilot announced a delay of two hours as something went wrong with the defrosting apparatus; luckily, the rain stopped and I could, then watch the swift manouvering of swallows skimming along the wet, shiny surface of the runway and hear the continuous calling of so many quails and the mellow chirping of noisy crickets.

We arrived in London rather late but still in time to pass through the customs, to travel to the other side of the airport and take my connection to New York. It was raining in Shannon too, and no moths were at the lights. The Atlantic crossed, Boston was reached the next morning; nothing was seen as the early mist was still very low; a lonely grasshopper rested on the waiting room wall, the first American insect I saw.

New York was reached half an hour later, and the high humidity could be noticed as soon as we left the plane and walked to the customs. A change of plane made me travel some distance, and while doing this I noticed the first butterfly sailing swiftly; it was the Alfalfa Butterfly, *Colias eurytheme* Boisduval. The third stop in the States was at Philadelphia. As it was a very short one I stayed in the plane watching from the porthole the numerous Pieridæ *Pieris rapæ* Linné sipping the yellow flowers of cruciferous plants which grew abundantly by the sides of the runway. Washington was the last stop and my destination, and being welcomed by the Program Officer and directed to a hotel, tired but happy, I felt that I was in reality, bodily and soul in the States.

The Orientation Period at Washington covered a heavy program; we were kept busy all the time from 9 a.m. till, sometimes, even up to 7:30 p.m. with a short break for lunch, as we had so many lectures to attend,, take part in discussion groups, visit historical places and schools, set up an international exhibition and also stage a Talent Show. Luckily, close to the Department Of Health, Education and Welfare in Constitution Avenue, just opposite the Botanic Gardens, there is a small rock garden with a lovely fountain in the centre; while visiting this nice spot before the start of the lectures, I managed to take two species of skippers viz. The Whirlabout, *Polites vibex* Geyer and the Sachem, *Atalopedes campestris* Boisduval, which were in large numbers on the zinnias and on the gomphrena. Every morning as I walked from the hotel to the bus stop, I disturbed the common *Plathypena scabra* Fabr.

Mr. H. W. CAPPS of the National Museum was first member I met, and through his kindness and help I was able to admire the private collections which are stored in this magnificent Museum.

Visiting the Zoo, on a Sunday morning, I saw the Black Swallowtail, *Papilio polyxenes asterius* Stoll, hawking here and there beyond the railings. On that same day, while I was transferring a Spring Azure, *Lycænopsis argiolus* Linné from the net to the killing bottle, I noticed close to my feet some small pupæ of a micro wrapped in fine web along the stem of an ailanthus plant; later, small spotted moths emerged.

When I visited Mount Vernon and the Arlington National Cemetery, together with the other members of the group, I noticed again the Alfalfa Butterfly and some Sulphurs.

The Orientation Period came to an end on the 19th September and travelling all the night of the 20th and almost the next day I reached Chicago when a thunderstorm was well ahead. Northwestern University in Evanston was to be my home for the fall term and through the help of Mr. BLAIR TURNER, another member of our Society, I found accommodation not far from his house; unfortunately, as he was still studying at Massachusetts, I could not meet him as he left Evanston the day before I reached there; however his parents were most helpful and visiting them so often I found in them a second home.

I must not forget my meeting with Mr. ARTHUR C. ALLYN JR., who although meeting me for the first time was so benevolent that he presented me with a copy of the wonderful book "Butterflies and Moths" published by Randon House, New York, which I highly appreciated; I still cherish his kind gesture and warm hospitality.

The University campus was wonderful at that time of the year, with all the majestic oak and maple trees just changing the colour of their leaves before shedding them for their winter rest. The weather was generally cold with no sunshine at all. I dare say, that in almost three months, I only saw one Mourning Cloak (*Nymphalis antiopa* Linné) and a couple of Sulphurs; however, returning home every evening from the University, I managed to bottle quite a good number of noctuids and geometers which were resting on the glass-panes of lit shopwindows. The following were the most common; *Protoparce quinquemaculatus* Haw., *Prodenia ornithogalli* Guenée, *Autographa precationis* Guenée, *Alabama argillacea* Hbn., *Drasteria erechtea* (?), and *Amyna octo* Guenée.

Every Saturday morning the Natural History Museum of Chicago was my rendez-vous; however as the curator of insects was away on Saturdays, I met him only once on a free Wednesday morning. While in Evanston, I got in touch with Mr. THOMAS BRADY, a fellow member who lives at La Grange and who invited me twice to dinner and to see his collection; together with his wife, he drove me in his car out in the country to do some collecting and to show me Morton Arboretum and the Chysanthemum Show at Garfield Park. One afternoon, we col-

lected the Silvery Checkerspot, *Melitæa nycteis* Doubleday, the Clouded Sulphur, *Colias philodice* Latreille and the "pallida" form of the Alfalfa. He also gave me a lot of his spare butterflies which he had collected from Florida, Arizona, and Colorado.

On the 18th December I left Chicago in bright sunshine for California, stopping at Kansas City, Santa Fe, Albuquerque, and at the Grand Canyon of Arizona. I spent the Christmas week at Los Angeles visiting San Diego, Whittier, Hollywood, Disneyland, and Santa Monica and was in San Francisco for the New Year. On January 6th, 1960, I reached Sacramento. I must not forget to record that travelling from San Francisco to Sacramento, I noticed four *Danaus plexippus* Linné. When in Sacramento, I paid a short visit to my friend, Mr. NOEL LA DUE with whom I had already exchanged some butterflies and so we knew each other through correspondence. He was surprised when he heard my voice on the telephone, as he never knew that I was in the States. He took me to his house to meet his family and to see his collection.

From the capital I travelled to Butte County where I had to spend the community phase of my program. I soon got familiar with the towns of this rural county, such as Chico, Oroville, Gridley, Durham, Paradise, and Biggs, as I spent a week in each as the guest of the County Superintendent of Schools and of his consultants, visiting Schools and lecturing to the various clubs and organizations.

When in Oroville, I visited a friend who was rearing tropical fish and under a verandah, I noticed a large number of pupæ all parasitized. I discovered from my friend that the caterpillars had eaten up the whole vine, a *Passiflora*, during the summer. With a little good luck, I managed to discover a live pupa which was still attached to a twig and wriggling its abdomen; it was carefully placed in a glass-bottomed box and put it close to the heater; in four days' time a lovely Fritillary emerged, *Agraulis vanillæ* Linné.

And again when in Durham, I was hearing mass one Sunday morning when the sun peeped out through an overcast sky and I heard the flapping of wings against the glass-panes of a nearby window, and through the venetian blind I could see a butterfly trying to escape. As the sunlight soon faded away, the hibernating butterfly went back to sleep. I waited patiently till the last member of the congregation had left the church, and then on tiptoe I went to the window and there I saw a big sized Tortoise Shell, may be the *Nymphalis californica*.

At Chico I dug a couple of pupæ of the Tomato Hawk Moth, commonly known as Tomato hornworm, but unfortunately they never emerged.

On February 12th, I left Butte County and proceeded to Denver, in Colorado, but snow covered the whole place, and again at St. Louis in

Missouri, it was raining all the time. My last week in Washington for the Evaluation Period was a contrast to my first week in September; cold wind, rain and snow, all the time. In New York from the 27th Feb. to the 2nd March, the temperature was always below the freezing point.

Thus ended my trip to the States, which after all, now, after a year away, I do consider as a real dream; but the contacts I made, the experience I gained, and the warm hospitality I received wherever I have been, made my stay with my fellow members and with the Americans in general an unforgettable event in the best part of my life. Everytime the postman calls he brings with him sweet recollections. As a lepidopterist, I consider this small but sincere contribution incomplete without giving the names of all the moths I collected; perhaps, one day, I shall find someone who would be kind enough to determine them for me and a complete list will be published.

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#### THE OCCURRENCE OF TWO *EUCHLOE* SPECIES IN ONTARIO (PIERIDÆ)

Species of the genus *Euchloe* Hbn. had not been recorded from Ontario until 1959. KLOTS (1951) omits Ontario from the range of *Euchloe olympia* Edw., and makes no mention of *Euchloe ausonides* Bdv. at all. RIOTTE (1959) records *E. ausonides mayi* Cherm. for the first time. The following is a detailed account of the known *Euchloe* specimens from the province to date.

On June 1, 1958, Mr. D. M. WOOD and the author collected a series of *E. ausonides mayi* along the roadside, 3 to 15 miles east of Beardmore, Thunder Bay Dist., Ont. These butterflies were very fresh; the only female collected had not flown. A specimen was sent to Dr. T. N. FREEMAN, Ottawa, who kindly determined it. At the same time, he informed me of four specimens of *E. olympia rosa* Edw. in the Canadian National Collection. These were taken on Strawberry Island, in the north channel of Georgian Bay, Ont., on May 10, 1942.

Another Ontario specimen of *E. ausonides mayi* was found in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto. It was taken at Malachi, Kenora Dist., Ont. (near the Manitoba border), July 5, 1947. A third record was submitted by Mr. U. PAIM, Toronto, who collected a series of the insect on June 1, 1956, at Basswood Lake, Rainy River Dist., Ont., near the Minnesota border.