

ESPECIALLY FOR FIELD COLLECTORS

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FIELD OBSERVATIONS ON THE RARE ARGYNNID, *SPEYERIA EGLEIS TEHACHAPINA*

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Up to the publication of COMSTOCK's *Butterflies of California* in 1927, the southern Californian race *tehachapina* Comstock of *Speyeria egleis* was known only from the four type specimens, collected in mid-July, 1918. Since that time, a few collectors have roamed the high elevations of the Tehachapi Mountains (type locality) and have been moderately successful in obtaining more examples of this lightly marked, almost unsilvered race. During 1962 we made a special trip to the type locality and surrounding areas to make observations on the ecology of this rare argynnid and collect a series of adults.

Leaving Los Angeles early on the morning of July 20, 1962, we followed U. S. Highway 6 to the town of Mojave in Kern County. At Mojave we turned west along Oak Creek Road and after traveling 10.3 miles, took a road heading southwest along Oak Creek. But here we learned from a rancher that the type locality area we wished to visit — Double Mountain — was closed to entrance on the south face because of fire hazard. Thus we were forced to retrace our steps and go northwest to the town of Tehachapi, where it was possible to get close to Double Mountain by driving along Water Canyon Road to Tehachapi Mountain Park, a good camping spot just north of this highest peak of the Tehachapis.

In Tehachapi Mountain Park itself, collecting along the creek in the late morning turned up some interesting species: *Papilio multicaudatus* Kirby, *P. rutulus* Lucas (with one specimen which appears to be a hybrid between these two *Papilio* species), abundant *Neophasia menapia* Felder & Felder fluttering about the pines, *Pieris protodice* Linnaeus, *Danaus plexippus* Linnaeus, swarms of *Cercyonis sthenele silvestris* Edwards, many ovipositing females of *Speyeria callippe macaria* Edwards, *Phyciodes mylitta* Edwards, a few *Polygonia satyrus* Edwards, *Satyrrium saepium* Boisduval, *S. dryope* Edwards, *Lycaena arota*

Boisduval, *L. xanthoides* Boisduval, *Plebejus acmon* Westwood & Hewitson, and many *Leptotes marina* Reakirt.

After noon, we hiked directly south from the Park and began to ascend the northern peak (locally known as Mt. Tehachapi, elevation 7986 feet) of Double Mountain. It required two hours to attain the peak. Along the way we collected or observed *Limenitis bredowii* Geyer, large numbers of the hairstreak *Habrodais grunus* Boisduval, and an occasional *Speyeria callippe macaria*; *Plebejus neurona* Skinner was found along the ridges, always in close association with its food-plant, *Eriogonum wrightii*.

When the highest ridge (which runs east from the peak of Mt. Tehachapi for approximately a mile before dropping off steeply) was reached, we sighted the first specimen of *tehachapina* — a male in somewhat worn condition. During the remainder of that afternoon, fifteen males and one lone (but fresh) female were taken. We were puzzled over the apparent absence of females, in view of the well-worn condition of several male specimens; the reason for this absence was discovered the next day. But we had a good opportunity to note some of the characteristic habits of the males.

S. tehachapina was easily distinguished in flight from *S. macaria* by its darker coloration and slightly more erratic, rapid flight. When frightened by the collector, *tehachapina* would always fly downhill; otherwise, the males were found only at the very top of the ridge. These adults occasionally visited the flowers of *Chrysothamnus nauseosus* and a low-growing, yellow-flowered species of *Eriogonum*, at which time they were easily netted.

The next morning (July 21) we again scaled the mountain in hopes of finding more females. It was then that we discovered that the flight activity of the females differed markedly from that of the males in this locality.

Along the sides of the high ridge we were scouting, many pine trees had been felled by lumbermen. In the clearings formed in this manner, among the fallen logs, we found freshly emerged females fluttering in weak flight. Twenty females and several more males were collected within six hours, to bring our total two-day catch to twenty-one pairs.

Thus we felt fortunate in being among the few lepidopterists who have found this rare butterfly during its mid-July flight period, and we planned then to return in a future season to attempt to locate the foodplants and obtain the life history of the insect.