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AN UNUSUAL MOTH IN CENTRAL ILLINOIS

After working on my car, at about 1400 on 14 November 1971, I drove it through a parking lot across the street from my home. I then noticed a large moth clinging to a building, about ten feet off the ground. A closer look revealed that it was a large noctuid. Immediately, I opened the back of the car, grabbed my net, made a lunge at the moth, and managed to capture it.

As soon as I got home, I checked my revised edition of Holland's *Moth Book*, and found that the moth I had just caught was *Thysania zenobia* Cramer. After reading that it was a "South American moth," I knew that I had caught something quite unusual for central Illinois. However, a moderately strong wind had been blowing from the south for several days preceding the capture, and as the specimen was slightly worn, this probably explains its presence this far north, especially at such a late time of year.

I am sure that this capture does not constitute a state record after checking with the University of Illinois and Eastern Illinois University; but it might be a new record at least for Coles County. If any members know of a previous capture of this species in this county, I would sincerely appreciate hearing from them.

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WING-SHAPE AND ADULT RESOURCES IN LYCAENIDS

Various small species of blues (Lycaenidae: Lycaeninae) are characterized by rather narrow elongated wings—a Nearctic example being *Zizula cyna* Edwards. In September of 1971 some observations were made on a related African species, *Zizula hylax* (F.) in the Gombe Reserve on Lake Tanganyika, Tanzania.

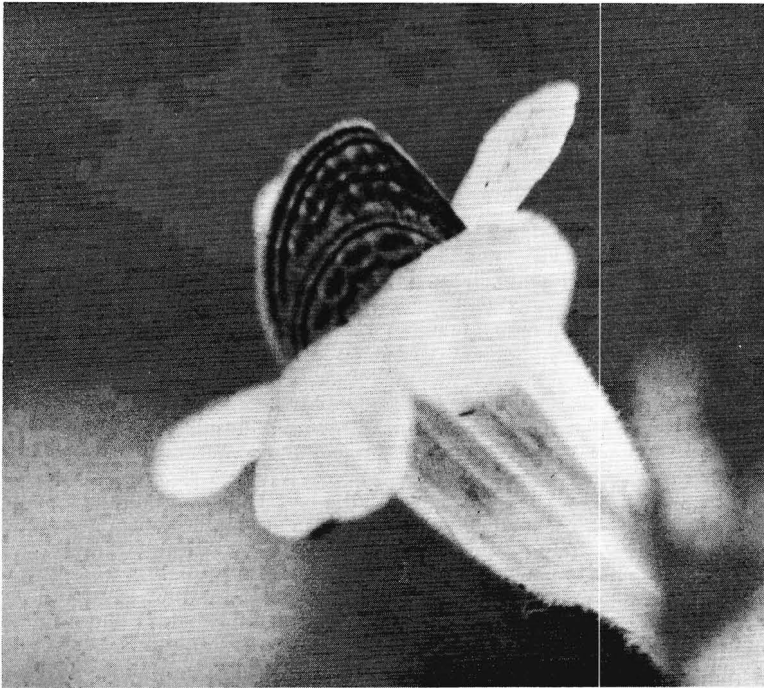


Fig. 1. *Zizula hylax* crawling into *Asystasia* flower. Margin of hind wing would be even with lip of flower when butterfly has fully entered. The length of the forewing in *Z. hylax* is about 11 mm.

September is near the end of a long dry season at Combe, and relatively few flowers were in bloom. Prominent among those blooming especially along water-courses, was a small herb *Asystasia gangetica* (L.) T. Anderson in the Acanthaceae (a largely tropical family related to the Scrophulariaceae). Those flowers were repeatedly visited by *Z. hylax* individuals. Their slender wings, when folded back, permitted the butterflies to crawl deep into the corolla to get at the nectar (Fig. 1). The fit was sufficiently tight to make it clear that even slightly wider wings would effectively prevent this behavior.

Zizula hylax has a weak flight compared with many small relatives with broader wings and it does not glide. It seems highly unlikely, therefore, that the high aspect ratio of the long slender wings produces a significant selective advantage through its aerodynamic properties. On the other hand, studies by our group in California, Colorado and Trinidad increasingly are showing the great significance of adult resources to the dynamics of butterfly populations. It seems most likely that the adaptive significance of wing-shape in this case is related to access to nectar. Further observations on related species would be most interesting.

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