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OVIPOSITIONAL MISTAKE BY A HACKBERRY BUTTERFLY (NYMPHALIDAE)

Ovipositional mistakes by female butterflies have been previously reported (Remington, 1952, *Psyche* 59: 61-70; Dethier, 1959, *Can. Ent.* 91: 554-561; Neck, 1973, *J. Lepid. Soc.* 27: 22-33). Such mistakes may occur on toxic, exotic species which have palatable native congeners (Straatman, 1962, *J. Lepid. Soc.* 16: 99-103; Kendall, 1964, *J. Lepid. Soc.* 18: 129-157).

Herein is described the behavior of a single female *Asterocampa clyton texana* (Skinner) (Nymphalidae) which was observed at 1810 hrs. CST on 7 August 1970 in a residential area of Austin, Travis County, Texas. The adult was observed flying around the yard mostly at ground level. The individual landed momentarily on several ornamental plants: Chinese privet, *Ligustrum sinense* Lour. (Oleaceae); heavenly bamboo, *Nandina domestica* Thunb. (Berberidaceae) and corona vine, *Antigonon leptopus* Hook. & Arn. (Polygonaceae). Subsequently, it landed on a blade of St. Augustine grass, *Stenotaphrum secundatum* Kuntze (Gramineae), upon which it quickly laid three eggs. It then landed on several dead branches of an adjacent Texas sugarberry, *Celtis laevigata* Willd. (Ulmaceae), its major larval food-plant in central Texas. Extrusion of the ovipositor was observed several times but no oviposition occurred. After flying out of the immediate area, the same individual returned at 1825 CST. It landed on the trunk of the privet plant and extruded its ovipositor but laid no eggs. It then flew out of sight and was not seen again.

Asterocampa normally oviposits small to large egg masses on the underside of hackberry leaves (Comstock, 1953, *Bull. So. Cal. Acad. Sci.* 52: 127-136; Langlois & Langlois, 1964, *Ohio J. Sci.* 64: 1-11). These observations involved a female *A. clyton texana* which had mated and was apparently intensely stimulated to oviposit although unable to locate new-growth leaves of *C. laevigata*. Such leaves were non-existent at the time of observation; the last significant rainfall had occurred on 28 May (0.97 in.).

These observations may provide insight into future research possibilities on strategies of oviposition in *Asterocampa* in semi-arid habitats. Several days previous to time of observation, weather conditions were overcast with high humidity as a result of fringe weather associated with Hurricane Celia; barometric pressure was slightly below normal levels. No substantial precipitation was recorded (0.22 in. on 4 August). Prolonged periods of slightly depressed barometric pressure and elevated relative humidity would normally be a reliable predictor of sufficient rainfall to produce new growth on *Celtis* which provides requisite oviposition sites.

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