

## GENERAL NOTES

### MYSCELIA ANTHOLIA (NYMPHALIDAE) IN THE REPÚBLICA DOMINICANA

According to Riley (1975, Field Guide to the Butterflies of the West Indies, p. 63) "there is no real information about the habits or habitat" of *Myscelia antholia* Godart. The species is known only from the Antillean island of Hispaniola and has been reported from Port-au-Prince, Haiti, and from El Número-Azua (1980, Marión Heredia, Naturalista Postal, 19/80) in the República Dominicana. Thus, there is only one published record of the species from the República Dominicana, and indeed there is little information available on *M. antholia*.

We spent the period between 19 June and 19 August 1981 in the República Dominicana, traveling extensively there and making a collection of 1600 butterflies. We saw or collected *M. antholia* at seven localities. Since so little information is available on the distribution or habitat of this species, it is appropriate to record our observations, which are given in temporal sequence. The first two records are open to some doubt, since they are based on individuals which were flying rapidly or which were passed while we were traveling in a vehicle. We are confident that these records are based on *M. antholia*, which is unmistakable in the field, but they should be treated with some circumspection. The remaining records are indisputable, based on clear sightings or specimens collected.

1) Prov. La Vega, 10 km SE Constanza, Cordillera Central, 1650 m, 2 July 1981. This individual was seen by the authors and W. W. Sommer as it crossed an open meadow at about 1200 h. The day was bright and sunny and the temperature 30°C.

2) Prov. La Vega, 3 km SE Constanza, Cordillera Central, ca. 1220 m, 2 July 1981. The butterfly was seen from a moving vehicle as it hovered and fluttered above a water-filled hole in the road surface at 1300 h. The weather was sunny and bright. The habitat was cut-over pine woods and cultivated fields.

3) Prov. Pedernales, Aceitillar, 35 km NE Cabo Rojo, Sierra de Baoruco, 1220 m, 19 July 1981. Seen clearly by both authors, the butterfly was flying towards and parallel to us along the road of the Alcoa Exploration Company at the bauxite mine at Aceitillar. The area is open pine woods with little shrubby undergrowth. The sighting was at 1500 h and the temperature was 26°C.

4) Prov. La Estrelleta, 10 km S Elías Piña, Sierra de Neiba, 732 m, 27 July 1981. The butterfly was seen clearly by both authors in a stand of open high-canopied hardwoods. When alarmed, the insect flew rapidly up a slope into dense woods and was not seen again. The sighting was at 1445 h and the temperature was 36°C.

5) Prov. San Juan, just SE Sabana Alta, 305 m, 29 July 1981. While we were traveling from San Juan to Azua along the Valle de San Juan, a *M. antholia* was clearly observed by both of us as it flew toward and parallel to us in an area of open fields. The habitat was generally *Acacia* scrub, but at the point of observation there was a fencerow covered with *Antigonon leptopus*, by which the butterfly flew without stopping, fled across the open field, and was not seen again. The time was 0935 h and the weather was bright and sunny.

6) Prov. Santiago Rodríguez, Loma Leonor, 18 km SW Monción, northern foothills of the Cordillera Central, 550 m, 3 August 1981. One ♀ *M. antholia* was collected in moderately dense deciduous riverine woods along the Río Toma at 1400 h and a temperature of 38°C. The butterfly was seen flying through the woods with the same erratic flight of *Hamadryas februa* Hübner; when pursued, it fled into the woods but 0.5 h later reappeared at the same site as previously and was taken while it rested on a tree trunk about 1 m from the base. The insect lit with its wings spread (thus exposing the metallic upperside), and then shortly closed them to become inconspicuous, since the ventral coloration has a bark-like camouflage. The head was pointed upward while resting. The area in the vicinity of the Río Toma is mixed pine-deciduous woods.

7) Prov. La Altagracia, 1 km N Playa Bayahibe, sea level, 16 August 1981. Three *M. antholia* were observed and two (1 ♂, 1 ♀) collected. The area is semi-xeric lowland

forest, quite dense, and all sightings were made along an unpaved road through the forest near Playa Bayahibe. The weather had been rainy the previous day (due to the passage of Tropical Wave Dennis), and the road was moderately wet and with many puddles of standing water. Over one of these, *M. antholia* was observed by the junior author; it had been drinking at 1030 h and was disturbed by the approach of the collector. It flew rapidly and erratically, low to the ground (0.5 m) about the collector's legs for about 20 seconds, then lit, head down, upon a 2.5 mm diameter sapling at the edge of the road very briefly, and when further pursued, flew into the woods. The second individual was seen as it flew along the road in a leisurely manner, close to the ground. The senior author attempted to catch it, but, alarmed, the butterfly flew some 10–12 m and came to rest on a tree trunk (0.5 m diameter), about 1.5 m above the ground and 1 m from the road within the woods. The head was pointed down and the wings were closed. When approached through the woods, the butterfly flew about 5 m further and somewhat deeper into the woods (perhaps 2 m) and landed once again with the wings closed. It was collected on this second tree. After the first alarm at the attempted capture, the insect flew in a deliberate and non-nervous manner and seemed in no hurry to reach the second tree where it rested. The last specimen was observed as it flew leisurely along the edge of the road near its opening onto the main paved road. It was netted without incident. These observations were made between 1015 and 1300 h. The weather was very hot and humid.

To summarize all the above records, in the República Dominicana *M. antholia* occurs from sea level to 1650 m but seems more common at higher elevations (above about 305 m). It is a butterfly of openings in woods (roads and other disturbed areas) into which it flies when alarmed. The flight is leisurely when undisturbed, but when pursued or in widely open areas (sightings 1, 5) it moves with determined and rapid flight. *Myscelia antholia* rests on saplings or trees, often landing with the wings open and the head either up or down, remains in this position for about 15 seconds and then folds the wings over the back to become inconspicuous. Temperatures of activity range between 26°C and 38°C.

*Myscelia antholia* may not be so rare as suggested by Riley; it may be rather periodic in activity or it may emerge at a time when most collectors are not in the field. The number of man-hours (33) spent at locality (7) in 1980 and 1981 without seeing *M. antholia* is truly amazing. Yet most of these hours (19) were in June and July, and these months may be too early for *M. antholia* except for scattered individuals. One other fact is pertinent: Of all Dominican localities where we saw or collected *M. antholia*, only (7) has been visited so frequently (6 times). Also, the visit to (7) when three individuals were seen was in the late morning; whereas, most other visits have been in the early afternoon when the temperatures were higher. It may be that *M. antholia*, like *Prepona amphitoe* Godart under similar circumstances, becomes inactive and rests during the heat of the day (especially in late July and August).

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