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EDITH'S COPPER, *LYCAENA EDITHA* (LYCAENIDAE), CONFIRMED FOR CANADA

Additional key words: Thomas Baird, Alberta.

The status of Edith's Copper, *Lycaena editha* (Mead), in Canada has been a matter of conjecture for some time, particularly in Alberta. Bowman (1934, 1951) included this species in his annotated lists of Alberta Lepidoptera, giving High River as the locality without further comment. This represented the only known Canadian record of Edith's Copper; its known range is restricted to the western US, from California to Montana eastward to Wyoming and Colorado (Scott 1986). Subsequent works (e.g., Ferris & Brown 1981, Scott 1986) also indicated this species as part of the Alberta fauna, presumably based on Bowman's list. Bird et al. (1995) were unable to authenticate this record and rejected it. Layberry et al. (1998) also treated this as a dubious record, and did not include *L. editha* as part of the Canadian fauna.

While curating the butterflies in the University of Alberta Strickland Museum collection in 2001, BCS discovered the putative High River specimen in a separate teaching collection, where it had gone unnoticed these many years. It is a male specimen, missing the left antenna but otherwise in excellent condition, with a label reading "High River, Alta / Baird" (Fig. 1). "High River" and "Baird" are handwritten on a printed Donald Mackie label, and "Edmonton" and "D. Mackie" are crossed out (Fig. 1). Comparison of the handwriting to other Donald Mackie labels shows that the specimen was labelled and likely pinned by Mackie after he received the unpinned specimen from Baird. A small amount of glue is visible on the ventral thorax and on the pin, further suggesting that the specimen

was not pinned fresh. Donald Mackie made extensive Lepidoptera collections, primarily from the Edmonton region, in the early to mid-1920's, and the specimen was likely either sent or given to him by Baird. Thomas Baird came to High River from Woodstock, Ontario in about 1896, and worked there for many years as a cobbler. He was an ardent and versatile collector of all groups of insects, though he appears to have been particularly partial to Diptera. F. H. W. Dod, in his series of "Further notes on Alberta Lepidoptera" (Dod 1914, 1915a, b) made frequent reference to Baird's collections. Among the moths that Baird collected, especially at light, were a number of taxa that were new to science.

The precise location where the High River specimen was collected is impossible to determine, but there is no reason to believe it was not collected in the general vicinity of the town of High River (50°35'N, 113°52'W). Suitable Canadian Zone valley bottom wet meadow habitat that *L. editha* is reported to frequent (Scott 1986) occurs in the Rocky Mountain foothills west of High River, and it is entirely possible that the specimen originated there. Other butterfly species collected by Baird and labeled as "High River" are restricted to montane habitats rather than the prairie habitat found at High River, suggesting Baird named his collection localities to the nearest major settlement, as did many early collectors.

Although it is possible that this specimen is mislabeled, there is no evidence to suggest this. Furthermore, there are no accounts of, or insect specimens



FIG. 1. Specimen representing the only confirmed Canadian record of *Lycaena editha* (Mead) (ventral view).

collected by, either Baird or Mackie to suggest they collected in the western U.S. (within the main range of *editha*) or exchanged specimens with other collectors.

Lycaena editha is present in Glacier Co., Montana just south of Waterton National Park (Ferris & Brown 1981) and attempts to locate populations of this species in the province should be concentrated in the Waterton to Crowsnest area (Bird et al. 1995) in July and August, during *L. editha*'s flight period (Scott 1986). Since there is no evidence to suggest that this specimen was not collected in the vicinity of High River, Alberta, Edith's Copper should be added to

both the Alberta and Canadian butterfly faunal treatments.

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