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Journal of the Lepidopterists' Society
61(3), 2007, 175

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Received for publication 22 November 2006, revised and accepted 25 May 2007.

POANES MELANE (HESPERIIDAE) OVIPOSITING ON AN AUSTRALIAN GRASS NATURALIZED IN CALIFORNIA

Additional key words: *Rytidosperma, Danthonia*, introduced species

The use of introduced plants as hosts by native California butterflies has been reviewed by Shapiro (2002) and Graves and Shapiro (2003), who found that the urban and suburban fauna of that state was now largely dependent on such plants. New records of this type appear regularly, demonstrating that butterflies colonize potential host plants more or less quickly after they appear in an area.

On 27 October 2006 I observed a female *Poanes melane* (W.H. Edwards) systematically searching for and ovipositing repeatedly on a low, tufted, apparently perennial grass I did not recognize in a parking strip in Berkeley, Alameda County, California. This grass was common in the neighborhood, occurring in lawns and waste ground in an older residential area of North Berkeley. Unable to identify it using Hickman (1993), I brought specimens to the U.C. Davis Herbarium where it was identified by Jean Shepard as *Rytidosperma racemosum* (R. Br.) Connor & Edgar (formerly placed in the genus *Danthonia*). This species was not recognized as naturalized in California when Hickman (1993) was in preparation. According to Stephen Darbyshire of Agriculture Canada, an authority on the genus, this grass was grown "experimentally" in gardens in Berkeley as early as 1941. It seems to have begun to spread in Alameda County in the early 1950s and is recorded as naturalized only in that county except for a 1978 record from the naval garrison on Angel Island, Marin County. According to Darbyshire and Barbara Ertter of the Jepson Herbarium at U.C. Berkeley as well as my own observations, it is now a fairly common weed in Berkeley and nearby Albany and will probably continue to spread.

Rytidosperma racemosum is originally from Australia. Various members of the genus were tested in California for forage potential as early as 1911 and *R. penicillatum* (Labill.), more commonly known as *Danthonia pilosa* R.Br., is naturalized in California, southern Oregon and Hawaii. It would hardly be surprising to find *P. melane* and other native skippers using these plants elsewhere. Although the ability of *P. melane* to feed and develop successfully on *R. racemosum* has not been demonstrated, it accepts most perennial and some annual grasses in the laboratory. Scott (1986) lists five very diverse grasses in as many genera plus one sedge (Cyperaceae). He does not provide sources for these records. Garth & Tilden (1986) record two native perennial grasses in southern California. Various other records are scattered in the literature, none of them being on *Rytidosperma*, which as noted above was not even recognized as being part of the California flora! Bay Area populations are now "urbanized" and routinely breed on Bermuda Grass (*Cynodon dactylon* (L.)Pers., while inland California populations are confined to riparian-wildland habitats (Shapiro and Manolis, 2007).

I thank Jean Shepard, Barbara Ertter and Stephen Darbyshire for their help.

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Received for publication7 November 2006, revised and accepted 12 June 2007.