

24. PERSISTENT VITALITY IN BEE-HOLE BORER MOTH
DUOMITUS LEUCONOTUS WLK.

At page 447 of Vol. 63 of the *Journal* Mr. Thomas Gay reports a case of persistent vitality in the Hooded Grasshopper *Teratodes monticollis*. I report here a similar case which I came across a few days ago in the bee-hole borer moth *Duomitus leuconotus* Wlk.

I caught the moth on the trunk of a *Cassia renigera* in my garden in the first week of this month, holding itself in a vertical position with its head uppermost. I took it to be a newly emerged imago and, as it was about 8 o'clock on a damp dull morning, guessed that it was not ready to fly. Placing my hand close against the trunk just in front of the moth I nudged gently at its head. The moth moved forward and settled on my right forefinger, which I held vertically thereafter so that the moth resumed its former vertical position. Coming into the house, I got out my killing bottle from the back of a book cupboard, opened it, and closed it over the moth. In between, I exhibited the moth to my wife and my daughter for their due admiration. All this was done slowly and deliberately, so as not to disturb the moth unduly. Altogether, I must have had the moth under my observation for at least ten minutes. Throughout this time, neither I nor my wife nor my daughter noticed anything unusual about the moth; it behaved as any recently emerged moth might have done. I was surprised therefore, when I opened the killing bottle two or three days later, to find the abdomen of the moth missing.

My killing bottle closes with a well-fitting lid, and was not touched by anyone in the intervening period. So there was no possibility of anything having got at the moth after its capture. The conclusion seems unavoidable therefore that the moth had no abdomen when I caught it. It is difficult to say what the loss of the abdomen was due to; possibly, it was caused by a lizard or some other predator which was disturbed before it could destroy the moth entirely. It is clear, however, that the loss of the abdomen did not prevent the rest of the body from behaving as it would otherwise have done; so much so, that all three of us who saw it took it to be an undamaged specimen fit to be sent to the Society for its collection.

Unfortunately, it did not strike me at the time to look for the discarded pupal case. I did so about six days later and found a fresh one protruding from an exit hole within a couple of feet of the place where I caught the moth. This was the only pupa skin to be seen, except for a very old pupal case which was too old to be

considered. So it is possible that my guess about the moth being newly emerged was correct.

Mr. N. T. Nadkerny at the Society's office, who kindly verified my identification, agrees with me that this is a case of persistent vitality similar to the one described by Mr. Gay.

65 PALI HILL,

BANDRA, BOMBAY 50-AS,

September 13, 1968.

D. E. REUBEN

[An instance of persistent vitality is given by M. A. Wynter-Blyth in his article 'The Nilgiris Revisited' in vol. 48 (1949) of this *Journal*. Writing on the Nilgiri Tiger Beetle (*Cicindela aurofasciata*) preying on the longicorn beetle (*Dorysthenes montanus*), he states that 'It is no uncommon sight to see one of these longicorns (which, if helpless against their enemies, are at least tenacious of life) walking briskly about though entirely disembowelled'—Eds.]

25. PREFERENCE OF CASTOR VARIETIES FOR FEEDING AND OVIPOSITION BY THE LEAFHOPPER *EMPOASCA FLAVESCENS* (F.) (HOMOPTERA, JASSIDAE)

I was very interested in S. Jayaraj's paper under this title (1968, *J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 65 (1): 64-75) as some years ago Dr. V. G. L. van Someren recorded that the larva of *Charaxes etesipe* Godt., (Lepidoptera, Rhopalocera) *etesipe*, would only eat the green-, or white-, stemmed variety of Castor, and preferred to starve rather than eat the red-stemmed, although both varieties were considered to belong to the same species by the Kew authorities. This is particularly strange as the larva of this subspecies also feeds on other Euphorbiaceae such as *Phyllanthus*, *Tragia* and *Croton*, whilst the larva of ssp. *tavetensis* Roths. feeds on Leguminosae, such as *Afzelia* and *Cassia* (Caesalpinaceae), *Dalbergia* (Papilionaceae) and *Entada* (Mimosaceae). With a monophagous larva such selectivity is understandable, but not when a larva feeds on several species of plant.

Has Mr. Jayaraj noticed any correlation between acceptability and stem colour?

MOMBASA,
July 24, 1968.

D. G. SEVASTOPULO, F. R. E. S.



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