

An unusual *Polyommatus thersites* with basal black spots on FW underside (Lepidoptera: Lycaenidae, Polyommatis)

Harry van Oorschot & John G. Coutsis

Abstract. A male *Polyommatus thersites* with basal black spots on its FW underside is reported for the first time, and the merits of differentiating this species from the similar *P. icarus* solely on the basis of the existence or not of these spots are questioned.

Samenvatting. Een mannetje *Polyommatus thersites* met basale, zwarte vlekken op de onderkant van de voorvleugel wordt voor het eerst gemeld, en de mogelijkheden om deze soort te onderscheiden van de gelijkende *P. icarus* enkel gebaseerd op de aanwezigheid van deze vlekken wordt besproken.

Résumé. Un mâle de *Polyommatus thersites* possédant des taches basales noires sur le dessous des ailes antérieures est signalé ici pour la première fois. La possibilité de distinguer cette espèce de l'espèce similaire *P. icarus*, en se basant seulement sur l'existence de ces taches est discutée.

Key words: Lycaenidae – Polyommatis – *Polyommatus* – *thersites* – *icarus* – male genitalia – Spain.

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Introduction

So far, one of the ways by which *Polyommatus thersites* (Cantener, 1835) had been differentiated from the similar looking *Polyommatus icarus* (Rottemburg, 1775) was by the total absence in the former of two black basal spots on FW underside, and the usual presence in the latter of these spots. In rare cases in which *P. icarus* lacked them, differentiation of the two taxa could safely be achieved by easily detectable differences in both male and female genitalia. In general it was assumed that *P. thersites* always lacked the FW underside basal black spots, and that specimens possessing them should necessarily be considered as being *P. icarus*.

An unusual *P. thersites* from Spain

Lately we obtained a male *Polyommatus* specimen from Pont de Suert, in Lerida, Spain, that for all practical purposes looked like a *P. icarus*, having two well-defined basal black spots on its left FW underside and one such spot on its right FW underside (Fig. 1). However, the faintly visible FW upperside androconial hairs, present in *P. thersites*, but always absent in *P. icarus*, led us to wander about its true identity. Upon dissection, its genitalia (Fig. 2) were found to have an aedeagus with a bulbous distal end [in *P. icarus* it is slender and straight (Fig. 3)], proving beyond doubt that this was indeed a *P. thersites*, and most certainly the first one ever reported of its kind.



Fig. 1. *Polyommatus thersites* (Cantener, 1835). Spain, Lerida, Pont de Suert, 900 m, 15.vii.1974. – a. Upperside, b. Underside.

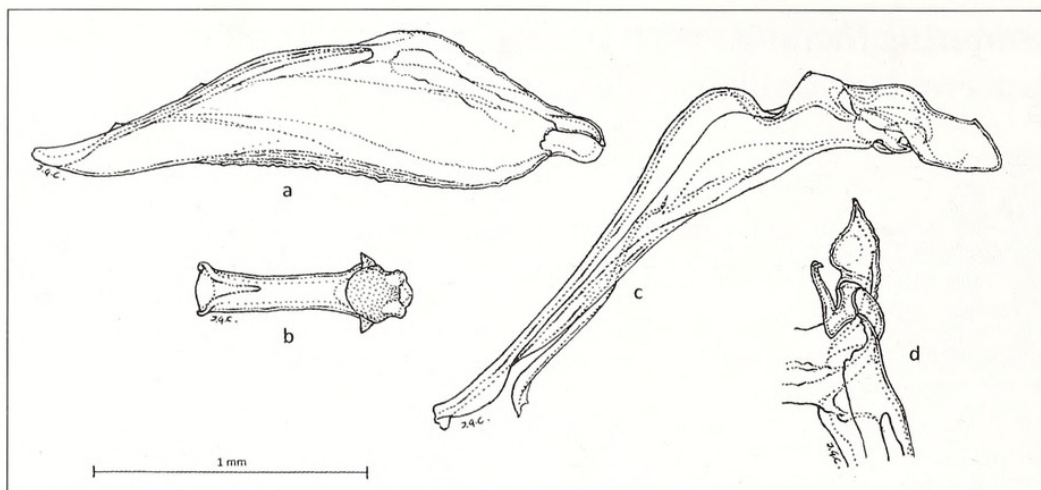


Fig. 2. *Polyommatus thersites* (Cantener, 1835). Spain, Lerida, Pont de Suert, 900 m, 15.vii.1974. Prep. No. 4544. Genitalic components. – a. Lateral aspect of outer face of left valve; b. Dorsal aspect of aedeagus; c. Lateral aspect of left side of genitalia, with valvae and aedeagus omitted; d. Ventral aspect of right half of tegumen together with right labis and falx.

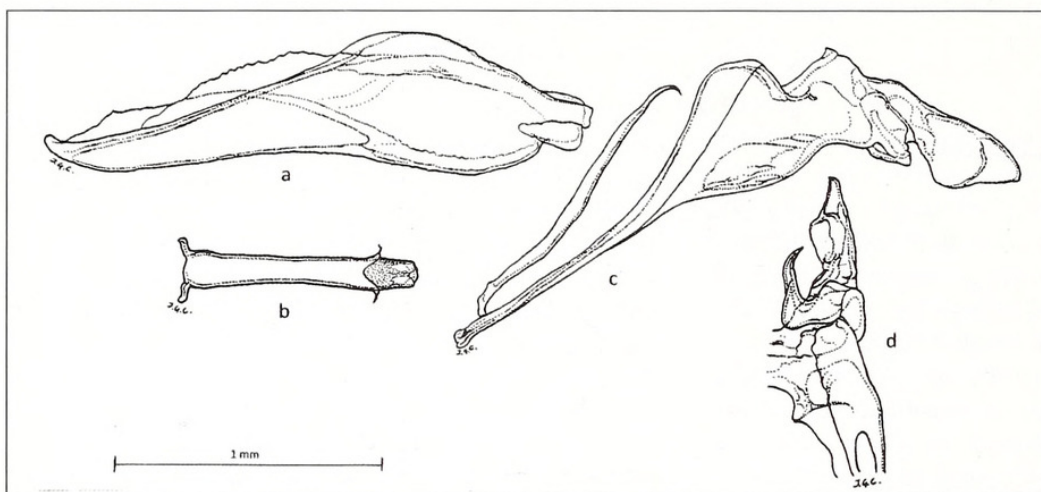


Fig. 3. *Polyommatus icarus* (Rottemburg, 1775). Spain, Albacete, Riopar, 1200 m, 25–26.vi.1995. Prep. No. 2672. Genitalic components. – a. Lateral aspect of outer face of left valve; b. Dorsal aspect of aedeagus; c. Lateral aspect of left side of genitalia, with valvae and aedeagus omitted; d. Ventral aspect of right half of tegumen together with right labis and falx.

Conclusions

This recent find suggests that the only fool-proof way to always differentiate both male and female *P. thersites* from *P. icarus* is by reference to their respective

genitalia. In the males in particular, differentiating the two taxa solely by reference to the FW upperside androconial hairs applies mostly to fresh specimens, as these hairs are often difficult to detect in worn *P. thersites*.



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