

## A new species of *Poecilmitis* Butler (Lepidoptera: Lycaenidae) from the Western Cape Province

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No. 51

Both sexes of this striking member of its group were found by Dr. Jonathan B. Ball on the Kammanassie Mountains, E.S.E. of Oudtshoorn, in the South Western Cape Province, on 9th and 14th December, 1978; while a few further specimens were secured there on 3rd February, 1979. It is believed that two females of a *Poecilmitis* which were captured on these mountains by Dr. C. B. Cottrell on 22nd December, 1969, may have answered to the female of the present insect. These specimens were referred to by the first writer as the possible female of *Poecilmitis daphne* Dickson, in *Entomologist's Rec. J. Var.* 87: 227 (1975) — a conjecture which was found to be incorrect after Dr. Cottrell had secured at a later stage the true female of *P. daphne*. These specimens are no longer available for comparison — but it must be admitted that, from a short description made at that time, they diverged in some respects from the known females of the present insect and could have been those of a *P. nigricans* (Aurivillius) -like butterfly, a male of which Dr. Cottrell caught there subsequently. The present species is a decidedly distinctive representative of its group and can be separated immediately from *P. daphne* by its greater average size, and, in the male, and amongst other features, the absence in all specimens of dark scaling bordering outwardly the brilliant metallic silvery-blue area of the forewing, and the presence of orange spaces in the cilia which in the great majority of specimens extend slightly on to the actual wing surface. The distal margins tend to be somewhat dentate, if not markedly so and, from material seen so far, distinctly so in comparison with the female of *daphne*. The male, anyway, differs decisively from the males of other, allied species.

*Poecilmitis balli* spec. nov.

### Upperside.

Ground-colour bright orange-red; the silvery-blue in the forewing of the male not as extensive as in the males of many of the other taxa of the group — as, for instance, in *P. thysbe* (L.) itself — this also applying to the extent of the dull greyish-blue in the forewing of the female of the present species.

### Male.

Forewing. Silvery-blue reaches end of cell but leaves a space of orange-red colouring, which varies in size, in outer part of cell. (In one paratype, there is only the barest trace of this orange-red marking.) Blue then enters, or may just enter, the inner, angular part of area 2, extends downwards to the black marking in area 1b if this is present (and which in some cases it actually obliterates) and finally reaches inner-

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margin at a point approximately two-thirds of distance along its length, from wing-base. A blue to violaceous-pink lustre extends for a certain distance beyond the solid blue area, over the orange-red portion of the wing, though chiefly in areas 1 and 1b. The usual black spotting of the *thysbe* group is clearly developed. Black distal border of moderate width, or somewhat broad in some specimens. Cilia black, or nearly so, at vein-ends, with white interruptions and usually with adjoining orange-red spaces inwardly, and this colouring normally just intruding on to the wing-surface itself (in one very small paratype and in other occasional specimens, it has not done so).

**Hindwing.** Outer edge of blue area forms a generally fairly even curve which reaches end of cell and, after meeting the basically dark greyish inner-marginal concavity, extends partially down the concavity, mainly in the form of light blue hairs. A shifting lustre extends, as in forewing, over a portion of the wing — but it is more widespread in the hindwing. The black spotting, of the *thysbe* type, is generally mainly small and not completely developed. About outer third, or two-fifths, of area 7 frequently but not always filled in with brownish-grey scaling. In some specimens there is a linear black edging along roughly upper-half of distal margin. Cilia with white spaces between the dark portions at end of veins, diminishing in clarity below approximately middle of distal margin — otherwise largely orange, although not so at end or area 7, where dark portions of the cilia adjoin the vein-ends, as is the case to some extent elsewhere also.

### Underside.

**Forewing.** Very similar in general to that of *P. thysbe* (L.). In some examples, anyway, the black spotting tends, as a whole, to be smaller than in the male of *thysbe*. Some of the individual spots are very pronouncedly steely-centred. Dark streak parallel with the distal margin clearly developed and sometimes broadened. Cilia mainly brownish- or orange-ochreous, with narrow white divisions (which extend acutely on to the wing-surface); the cilia terminally largely black, like the distal portion of the veining itself.

**Hindwing.** Pattern basically that of *thysbe*; the silvery lituræ clear and fully developed and the darker marking of the wing prominent. General ground-colour varying from fawny-ochreous to, often, a rufous tone and one much richer in that usual in *thysbe*; the dark marking, dark brown (sometimes almost black in places) to warm orange-brown or ferruginous — the darkest parts of this marking occurring chiefly in the inner-third of the wing and in a curved zone beyond middle. Cilia fawny-ochreous, mixer partly with dark brown or sometimes blackish, and with narrow white or beyond middle. Cilia fawny-ochreous, mixer partly with dark brown or black.



Length of forewing: 14.0-15.5 mm. (14.5 mm. in holotype). Two abnormally small males have a forewing measurement of only 12.0 and 12.5 mm. respectively.

**Female.**

Forewing distally rounded with only a suggestion of "elbowing" one-third of distance from apex. Blue from wing-bases dull and devoid of the strong shifting lustre present in the male (as is in fact usual in this group).

**Upperside.**

**Forewing.** The dull blue comparatively restricted and either not, or hardly, reaching costal margin; its outer margin forming a not sharply defined irregular curve which may be in contact with a small dark spot in cell (when this spot is present, as in the allotype), and which terminates at its lowest point almost half-way along innermargin. The black spotting of orange-red area is mostly well developed, the black distal border tending to be broader than in the majority of male specimens (rather noticeably so in the allotype). Cilia with only the slightest trace of orange at base of white divisions and no orange on adjoining wing-surface. (The margin tends to give a more dentate impression than in the male.)

**Hindwing.** Blue of much the same extent as in male, apart from its outer margin meeting the inner-marginal concavity at a lower point than in most male specimens. The dark marginal line more continuous than in male. Cilia with the dark portions decidedly prominent and the white spaces as a whole more noticeable, with orange colouring less in evidence.

**Underside.**

**Forewing.** As in male in all essentials. Spotting inclined to be a little heavier.

**Hindwing.** As in male.

Length of forewing: 15.5-16.25 mm. (the latter measurement, in holotype).

Body and ancillary parts, in both sexes, very much as in *P. thysbe*, with perhaps more darkening in places, as in vicinity of head.

♂ Holotype, WESTERN CAPE PROVINCE: Kammanassie Mountains, 14.xii.1978 (Dr. J. B. Ball).

♀ Allotype, W. CAPE PROVINCE: data as for holotype, 3.xi.1979 (Dr. J. B. Ball). Dr. Ball has wished to present the holotype and allotype to the Transvaal Museum, Pretoria.

Paratypes in Coll. Dr. J. B. Ball: data as for holotype, 9.xii.1978, one ♂; 14.xii.1978, two ♂♂, one ♀; 3.ii.1979, two ♂♂ (J. B. B.)

Paratype in Coll. British Museum (Nat. Hist.), WESTERN CAPE PROVINCE: Kammanassie Mountains, 3.ii.1979, one ♂ (Dr. J. B. Ball); British Museum Reg. No. Rh. 18692.

Paratypes in Coll. W. H. Henning: as holotype, 14.xii.1978, two ♂♂.

Dr. Ball had suggested, tentatively, that the present butterfly was nearest to *P. endymion* Pennington (1962, *J. ent. Soc.*







Dickson, C G C and Henning, G A. 1981. "A new species of *Poecilmitis* Butler (Lepidoptera: Lycaenidae) from the western Cape Province." *The entomologist's record and journal of variation* 92, 294–297.

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