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Abstract

An account is given of this first record of Nymphalis antiopa (Linnaeus, 1758) from the Maltese Islands.

KEY WORDS: Lepidoptera, Nymphalidae, Nymphalis antiopa, new record, Malta Islands.

Introduction

The Nymphalidae is a large family well represented in Europe. A few of them are strong migrants, capable of extending their range during the summer months.

The discovery of Nymphalis antiopa (Linnaeus, 1758) in Malta is most interesting as it a species associated more with colder climates, and its presence in Malta is best regarded as an accidental human important, more so because the place where it was collected is very near the Free Port [where container ships load and unload containers coming from all parts of the world], Birżebbuġa. The specimen, a female in perfect condition except from some loss of scales on the left forewing, was found resting in a shaded front porch of a house. It is very probable that the specimen reached our shores in the form of a pupa, although the place of its origin, which could be from nearby mainland Italy or as far away as Japan, will remain a mystery.

Sammut (2000) lists 9 species of Nymphalidae recorded for Malta. Two of these, Vanessa atalanta (Linnaeus, 1758) and Vanessa cardui (Linnaeus, 1758) are migrants and breed in Malta.

The others, namely Nymphalis polychloros (Linnaeus, 1758) (Schembri, 1986), Polygonia egea (Cramer, 1775) (Valletta, 1948) are recorded as rare migrants. Inachis io (Linnaeus, 1758) (Sammut, 2000) and Aglais urticae (Linnaeus, 1758) (Sciberras & Sciberras, 2006) are recorded as an accidental importation. The remaining three, Polygonia c-album (Linnaeus, 1758), Melitaea cynthia (Linnaeus, 1758) and Melitaea didyma (Esper, 1778) (Borg, 1932) have always been regarded as doubtful records or misidentifications.


Range: Europe as an occasional migrant in N. Portugal, N. Spain and eastwards through most of Europe to north of Fennoscandia, south of Greece and European Turkey; throughout temperate Asia and most of North America (Tolman, 1997). Generally it flies from 0-2000 m: occasional as migrants / vagrants in barren terrain above 2600 m.
Flight period in Europe: Univoltine. South Europe, mid-June - July; Scandinavia, August - September. Hibernated specimens appear March - June according to locality.

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