

The Butterflies of Wallis and Futuna

Brian H Patrick

Wildlands, Box 33499, Barrington, Christchurch, New Zealand 8244

Jean-Pierre Policard

16 Rue du Docteur-Floch, 97310 Kourou, France

Email: bpatrick@xtra.co.nz

Introduction

The tropical Pacific islands known as the Territory of Wallis-and-Futuna, are a French administered territory south of the Equator between Fiji and Samoa. Fiji and Samoa are about as distant from the islands as Wallis is from Futuna.

The Territory of Wallis-and-Futuna has been administered by France since 1888, and consists of three main islands with a total area of 274 square kilometres and population of 12,200 (census 2013) as follows;

- Wallis (population of 8,600; 159 km²) and surrounding and uninhabited islets. The capital Mata 'Utu is situated on the east coast and has a population of 1,000. Discovered by the British navigator Samuel Wallis in 1767, but already inhabited by Polynesian peoples, it is a mainly flat island rising to 145 metres.
- Futuna (population of 3,600; 64 km²) 230 km to the southwest of Wallis discovered by the Dutch in 1616. A mountainous island rising to 524 metres.
- Alofi (51 km²) 2 km east of Futuna is uninhabited due to a lack of freshwater. It is a mountainous island rising to 417 metres.

Patrick & Patrick (2012) recorded four butterfly species for Wallis and Futuna based on the records in Tennant (2006).

One of us (JPP) spent four months on the island of Wallis in 2014 and made a collection of butterflies which was sent to BHP for identification and curation.

The result is a fine collection of 35 specimens of eight species, with positive records of an additional two species that were unable to be captured, making a total butterfly fauna of ten species. Six of the ten species are new territory records for Wallis and Futuna. All the following records are from Wallis and Nukuhifala Islet (east of Wallis), with one photographic record from Futuna. Short trips were made to Alofi and Futuna but no butterfly specimens were caught there.

The 35 specimens are stored dry in the private collection of BHP in Christchurch, New Zealand.

Results

Table 1 gives an annotated list of the ten butterfly species recorded.

Discussion

All four previously recorded butterfly species from Wallis and Futuna were relocated during this survey, but interestingly one of the lycaenids *Euchrysops cnejus samoa* was only found on the small islet of Nukuhifala, east of Wallis. (Fig.1) Its status on Wallis itself is unknown, but it may be much localised there.



Fig.1. *Euchrysops cnejus samoa* Samoa from Nukuhifala Islet.

FAMILY/Species	ABUNDANCE	NOTES
<i>*Catopsylia pomona</i>	uncommon	Lemon migrant was regularly seen flying high and fast overhead – a new territory record-not caught
<i>*Eurema brigitta australis</i>	locally common	Small grass yellow was locally common on tracksides-new territory record
NYMPHALIDAE		
<i>Euploea boisduvalii boisduvalii</i>	uncommon	Endemic subspecies to Fiji and Wallis & Futuna
<i>Euploea lewini eschscholtzii</i>	common	Endemic subspecies to Fiji and Wallis & Futuna
<i>*Hypolimnias bolina pallescens</i>	uncommon	Blue moon is found in only a few sites –new record
<i>Junonia villida villida</i>	rare	Meadow argus was previously recorded from Wallis & Futuna- photographed and not caught
LYCAENIDAE		
<i>*Catochrysops taitensis taitensis</i>	rare	Silver pea-blue found only on Nukuhifala Islet east of Wallis –new territory record
<i>Euchrysops cnejus samoa</i>	rare	Pacific spotted pea-blue found only on Nukuhilafa Islet east of Wallis
<i>*Jamides candrena</i>	common	Fijian blue was previously thought to be confined to Fiji-new territory record
<i>*Zizina otis labradus</i>	very abundant	Common blue is found on tracksides everywhere – new territory record

Table 1. A list of the ten species of Lepidoptera recorded from Wallis & Futuna with notes on their abundance. (*= a new record for the Island group)

It is not surprising that the common blue *Zizina otis labradus* is now found on Wallis, as it appears to be expanding its range in recent decades by unknown means, but perhaps with human assistance (Patrick & Patrick, 2012). But the discovery of the Fijian blue *Jamides candrena* on Wallis is a little surprising, as it was thought to be a species endemic to Fiji. With its shining blue wings, it is an unforgettable sight as it flies around forest and shrubland edges. During this survey it was found to be quite common. This species joins the crows *Euploea lewinii eschscholtzii* and *E. boisduvalii boisduvalii* as shared with Fiji, the former exclusively, the latter with Tonga also. (Fig.2



Fig. 2 *Euploea boisduvalii boisduvalii* from Walls and Futuna Islands.

The silver pea-blue *Catochrysops taitensis taitensis* (Fig.3) is a new island record for Wallis where it was found to be rarely seen. It is a butterfly widespread across the South Pacific but never particularly common (Patrick & Patrick, 2012). Elsewhere its larvae have been found feeding on the flowers of *Desmodium* (Fabaceaea).

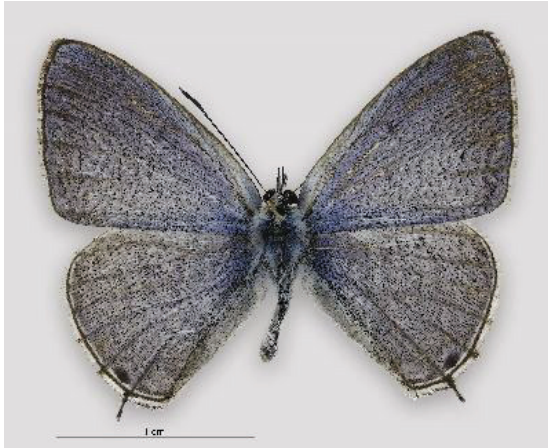


Fig.3 The silver pea blue, *Catochrysops taitensis taitensis*

The blue moon butterfly *Hypolimnas bolina pallescens* is another new record for Wallis, where it was found to be uncommon. Elsewhere this subspecies is known from Fiji, Tokelau Islands, Tonga, Samoa and American Samoa and is generally one of the more common butterflies. Its rarity here may hint that it is a recent addition to the butterfly fauna or that its larval hostplants are uncommon here also. More research is necessary to pinpoint its larval hostplants here and observe if it is on Futuna too.

The butterflies of Wallis and Futuna show a distinctive distribution pattern with many of the species shared between Tonga and Fiji (small grass yellow - *Eurema brigitta australis* (Fig. 4) and crow *Euploea boisduvalii boisduvalii*), or just with Fiji (blue *Jamides candrena* and crow *Euploea lewinii eschscholtzii*). The other six butterfly species of Wallis and Futuna are more widespread species across the South Pacific islands.



Fig. 4 *Eurema brigitta australis* from Wallis and Futuna Islands.

It would be informative to research the butterflies of the islands of Futuna and uninhabited Alofi, where presumably more natural vegetation exists.

References

Patrick, B.H. & Patrick, H.J.H. 2012: *Butterflies of the South Pacific*. Otago University Press. 240 pages.

Tennent, W.J. 2006: A checklist of the butterflies of Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia and some adjacent areas. *Zootaxa*, **1178**: 1-209.