

## *Hypolimnas bolina* on Alphonse Island

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On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007 Susan Barclay and I were walking at the southeast point of Alphonse Island, among coastal vegetation, chiefly coconut *Cocos nucifera* and veloutyer *Scaevola sericea*. A large butterfly with a strikingly languid flight appeared and paused at various places along the sunlit vegetation, occasionally landing, flexing its wings 3 or 4 times before resting with wings closed for a minute or so before taking off again. After flying off more strongly northwards it would return again and repeat its performance, never settling for long, favouring the same stretch of *Scaevola*, until it disappeared for good after 20 minutes or so. I took several photographs, although the upperwings were difficult because at rest they were never exposed for long.

In appearance it resembled an oversized male *Hypolimnas missipus* (Linnaeus 1764), of which there were many around, but the flight was markedly lazier, the whitish patches on the upperwing not as white – in fact having a violet cast – and the underwing was not as contrastingly marked. Photographs subsequently showed the whitish upperwing patches as quite a bright violet blue, which they certainly weren't in the field.

After consulting Gerlach & Matyot (2006) and failing to find it, I sent pictures to Justin Gerlach who identified it as a male *H. bolina*, and this was confirmed by James Lawrence.



Fig. 1. *Hypolimnas bolina* on Alphonse island

The great eggfly *Hypolimnas bolina* (Linnaeus, 1758) has a wide distribution from Madagascar in the west to south and southeast Asia, islands of the South Pacific, parts of Australia, Japan and New Zealand. A purple-blue iridescence surrounds the white upperwing spots of the male. The closest population to Seychelles, in Madagascar, is of the race *H. b. jacintha* (Drury, 1773).

The occurrence took place during an influx of *H. misippus*, a regular visitor to Seychelles following strong northwesterlies during the northwest monsoon season November – April (as on this occasion), suggesting this individual *bolina* was a genuine immigrant rather than an arrival as pupa or larva in imported plant material.

Previous occurrence of this species in Seychelles is unclear: Hill & Currie (2007), in their account of *misippus*, suggest that *bolina* ‘also occurs in Seychelles’.

## References

- Gerlach, J. & Matyot, P. (2006) *Lepidoptera of the Seychelles Islands*.  
Hill, M. & Currie, D. (2007) *Wildlife of Seychelles*. Collins.