



<http://dx.doi.org/10.11646/zootaxa.3718.2.7>

<http://zoobank.org/urn:lsid:zoobank.org:pub:5D3C30F9-AB1A-4921-8FDC-34A8D59FAD3F>

Two new *Aphnaeus* (Lepidoptera: Lycaenidae: Theclinae) species from Liberia

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Abstract

Two new butterfly species belonging to the genus *Aphnaeus* (Lycaenidae: Theclinae), *A. mirabilis* sp. n., *A. nimbaensis* sp. n. were found in the Nimba Mountains, Western Range, Liberia in February 2012. Both are illustrated and described in comparison with closely related species: *A. flavescens* Stempffer, 1954 and *A. liberti* Bouyer, 1996, respectively. Genitalia of the male holotype of *A. nimbaensis* are also illustrated.

Key words: *Aphnaeus mirabilis* sp. n., *Aphnaeus nimbaensis* sp. n., Nimba Mountains, West Africa

Introduction

Aphnaeus (Lycaenidae: Theclinae) is a relatively small genus in the Afro-tropical Region, which after the first revision by Stempffer (1954), further revisional notes by Bouyer (1996) and recent description of a few additional species (Bouyer & Libert 1996, Collins & Larsen 2008) hosts just 23, usually easily recognizable and generally very attractive, species (D'Abbrera 2009). Many *Aphnaeus* inhabit high forests in the Guineo-Congolian Forest Zone, while others are known as savannah dwellers in Eastern and Southern Africa (Larsen 1991, Pringle *et al.* 1994). Imagos of the majority of the species possibly stay in the canopy of trees and taller bushes (hence their English vernacular name: Highfliers). They are rarely encountered near ground level, apart from a few occasions, where males perch on grasses and low bushes, during displaying or hill-topping, or in the high dry season, when both sexes occasionally join mud-puddling assemblages (Kielland 1990, Larsen 1991, Larsen 2005, Woodhall 1989 and Collins, Sáfián personal observations). Some species were also observed feeding on flowering bushes and trees. The larvae of a few species are known to develop in association with *Crematogaster* ants (Callaghan 1993, Pringle *et al.* 1994), some species might be hosted by tailor ants (*Oecophylla* spp.) (Larsen 2005), the development of the majority of the species remains unknown.

During a butterfly diversity survey in the Nimba Mountains, Nimba West, Liberia in February 2012, two *Aphnaeus* species were caught; both of them are recognized as new to science and are described below. Both species belong to the “*A. adamsi*-group” s. Bouyer (1996); *A. mirabilis* is close to *A. flavescens* Stempffer, 1954, *A. nimbaensis* to *A. liberti* Bouyer, 1996.

Material and methods

Acronyms for the Lepidoptera collections where further comparative materials were viewed are as follow

ABRI	African Butterfly Research Institute, Nairobi, Kenya
MNHN	Muséum national d'histoire naturelle, Paris, France
NHM	National History Museum, London, UK
NMK	National Museums of Kenya, Nairobi