



## The butterflies (Lepidoptera: Papilionoidea and Hesperioidea) of the Catimbau National Park, Pernambuco, Brazil

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### Abstract

The first butterfly checklist for the Caatinga region and information about the taxonomic composition and seasonal structure of these butterflies is presented here. This study was conducted in the Catimbau National Park, located in the semi-arid region of northeastern Brazil. The butterflies were collected from September, 2005, to August, 2006; 5 days per month, on trails exhibiting flowering plants and also by using fruit-bait traps. A total of 121 butterfly species was recorded; half of them exclusively in the rainy season, 7% exclusively in the dry season and 42% in both seasons. The species richness was low when compared to neotropical rainforest habitats, due to strong seasonality and the structurally simple vegetation. The butterfly fauna is dominated by species typical for open areas and of wide geographical distribution. No endemism was discovered.

**Key words:** Checklist, insect fauna, seasonality, semi-arid, Caatinga, savanna

### Introduction

An inventory of the local biota is the first step in knowing a region's biodiversity and understanding the ecological interactions that occur in a studied group. It is especially important in poorly studied environments, which are suffering accelerated destruction. This is the case in the Caatinga, a proportionally less-protected and studied Brazilian natural region which is highly susceptible to human impact (Leal *et al.* 2003; Leal *et al.* 2005).

Little is known about the Lepidoptera fauna of the Caatinga (Silva *et al.* 2004) and surveys of the region are only available for the family Sphingidae (Duarte *et al.* 2001; Gusmão & Creão-Duarte 2004; Duarte & Schlindwein 2005).

The Catimbau National Park is located in the NE-Brazilian semi-arid region but does not constitute a typical Caatinga due to the higher altitude and more humid local conditions. The vegetation of the park is characterized by a mixture of Caatinga, "Campos Rupestres", Cerrado and Atlantic Rainforest species, including some endemic species (Andrade *et al.* 2004; Gomes *et al.* 2006). There is no information about the local butterfly fauna.

In this study, the first butterfly checklist for a Caatinga area is provided.