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Contributions to the study of the Ethiopian Lepidoptera. I. The genus *Melittia* Hübner, 1819 [“1816”] (Lepidoptera: Sesiidae) with description of a new species

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Abstract

The genus *Melittia* Hübner, 1819 [“1816”] (Sesiidae) is reviewed for the country of Ethiopia. *Melittia ambo* **sp. nov.** is described from vicinities of Ambo, West Shewa zone, Oromia. Adults, including male and female genitalia, and the larval host plant, *Citrullus colocynthis* (L.) Schrad. (Cucurbitaceae), are illustrated. Additional, *Melittia pyropis* Hampson, 1919 is recorded for Ethiopia for the first time, and the holotype of *M. abyssiniensis* Hampson, 1919 is illustrated.

Key words: Lepidoptera, Sesiidae, *Melittia ambo* **sp. nov.**, *M. pyropis*, *M. abyssiniensis*, Ethiopia, taxonomy, new species, first record, host plant

Introduction

Ethiopian entomofauna is studied quite inadequately even as compared to the neighboring African countries. Practically nothing is known about the structure of entomological communities, their biotopic distribution, preimaginal stages, and ecology and phenology of most species, even those which are of great practical interest. The identification of most groups of Ethiopian insects is presently associated with rather great difficulties because of the absence of adequate literature. Meanwhile, studying Ethiopian entomofauna is not only of general scientific, but also of great practical significance for crop protection. For example, the number of species of Lepidoptera that are pests of *Coffea arabica*, one of the major crops in Ethiopia is about 100 (Robinson *et al.*, 2015). In addition, many species of Lepidoptera are pests not only of agriculture, but also of forests which have a great economic importance in the country that lacks natural gas or coal for and relies on charcoal for the needs such as cooking.

A comprehensive study of the fauna of Lepidoptera, especially so-called Macrolepidoptera, is one of the main goals of the Joint Ethiopian-Russian Biological Expedition. The Expedition was established in 1987 as a Joint Ethiopian-Soviet Biological Expedition (JESBE) and is based on the Agreement signed between the Ethiopian Science and Technology Commission and the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. However, it has been renamed as the Joint Ethiopian-Russian Biological Expedition (JERBE) following the change in the former Soviet Union.

Dr. Leo Medvedev was a first entomologist who conducted investigations of entomofauna of Ethiopia as a member of the JESBE. His studies were conducted in the area between the rivers of Baro and Akobo in the current state of Gambella in November–December 1987 (Medvedev, 2000). The list of butterflies collected by him and Dr. Leonid Rybalov was published in Gorbunov & Tuzov (2000).

Additional investigations on the Lepidoptera have been conducted during last seven years. The Ambo Plant Protection Research Center (PPRC) situated some 100 km westward of Addis Ababa was selected as a main site. Besides I was able to collect Lepidoptera in some other places such as Arba Minch, Agaro, Cholomu Forest at Ginchi, Debre Birkhan, Sodore, etc. The plume moth specimens (Lepidoptera, Pterophoridae) have already been studied (Ustjuzhanin *et al.*, 2011), and several papers on other group are in preparation.

The present paper reviews the genus *Melittia* Hübner, 1819 [“1816”] (Sesiidae) for the country of Ethiopia. Only *Melittia abyssiniensis* Hampson, 1919 was known from Ethiopia prior to the present study, which adds *M. pyropis* Hampson, 1919 and *M. ambo* **sp. nov.** to that list.