

***Azanus ubaldus* (CRAMER, 1782) on Gran Canaria (Canary Islands, Spain) (Lepidoptera : Lycaenidae)**

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Samenvatting. *Azanus ubaldus* (CRAMER, 1782) op Gran Canaria (Canarische Eilanden, Spanje) (Lepidoptera : Lycaenidae)

Azanus ubaldus (CRAMER, 1782) wordt voor de eerste maal vermeld van het eiland Gran Canaria (Canarische Eilanden, Spanje). Morfologische verschillen met de verwante soort *A. jesous* (GUÉRIN, 1847) worden gedeeltelijk opgesomd en de lezer wordt verder verwezen naar de relevante publikaties. Tot slot volgt een korte beschrijving van de ecologie en fenologie van *A. ubaldus*.

Résumé. *Azanus ubaldus* (CRAMER, 1782) à la Grande Canarie (Iles Canaries, Espagne) (Lepidoptera : Lycaenidae)

Azanus ubaldus (CRAMER, 1782) est mentionné pour la première fois de la Grande Canarie (Iles Canaries, Espagne). Des différences morphologiques par rapport à l'espèce apparentée *A. jesous* (GUÉRIN, 1847) sont partiellement énumérées et le lecteur est renvoyé aux publications s'y rapportant. L'article se termine par un court exposé sur l'écologie et la phénologie d'*A. ubaldus*.

Key words : *Azanus ubaldus* - Gran Canaria - Canary Islands.

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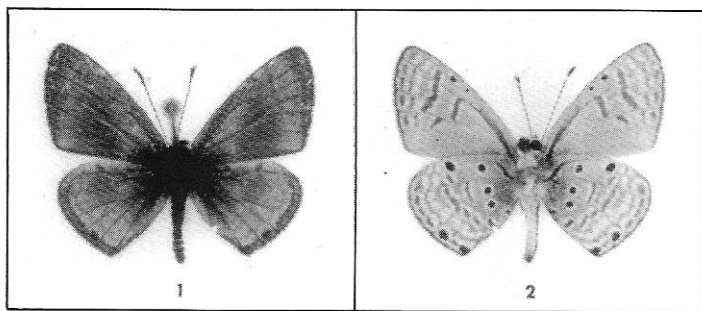
Introduction

After the first author had met Mr Jos DELNOYE on Kípros (Cyprus) in June 1991, both authors were kindly invited to visit MM. M. & J. DELNOYE on 18th January 1992. While reviewing their very nice butterfly collection, we came across three males of a small blue lycaenid that our hosts asked us to identify. These three specimens appeared to belong to *Azanus ubaldus* (CRAMER, 1782) and were labelled as follows : «Playa del Inglés. Gran Canaria. 21-30/IV/1982. leg. P. Nijssen».

As far as we know, this butterfly has never been reported from the Canary Islands in any publication up to the most recent one (FERNÁNDEZ-RUBIO 1991a, b) dealing with its fauna and therefore we believe this record to be worthy of publication.

Comments

The genus *Azanus* MOORE, 1861 is mostly a genus of the African savannah, with some species extending to Arabia and the Indian subcontinent. In all there are between 7 and 10 species, according to different authors (STEMPFER 1967: 250-252; BRIDGES 1988: II.17; LARSEN 1991: 240). Two of these are known to penetrate very slightly into the most southern parts of the West-Paleartic, viz. *A. jesous* (GUÉRIN, 1847) and *A. ubaldus* (CRAMER, 1782). Both these species are known to occur on the mainland opposite to the Canary Islands, in Morocco and in the former Rio de Oro, and the latter taxon has also been recorded from desert oases in southern Tunisia (HIGGINS 1975: 121; RUNGS 1981: 454, 1992: 365; LARSEN 1986: 67; DEVARENNE 1990: 149).



Figs 1-2: *Azanus ubaldus* (CRAMER, 1782) male, Playa del Inglés, Gran Canaria, Canary Islands, Spain, 21-30.IV.1982, leg. P. NIJSSEN, in coll. D. VAN DER POORTEN; 1. upperside, 2. underside.

The differences between both species have been enumerated and illustrated in a whole series of publications. For the present purpose it suffices to mention the following diagnostic external features that always differentiate *A. ubaldus* specimens without any doubt :

- the sharply defined patch of androconial scales on upperside forewing in the male;
- the absence of any spot in the cell on underside forewing in both sexes.

Both taxa also differ in structural characters (male genitalia and androconial scales). Relevant illustrations can be consulted in the following publications :

1. adults of both species : LARSEN 1980: 162-163, Plate 4; LARSEN & LARSEN 1980: 64; LARSEN & NAKAMURA 1983: 180, Plate 8; LARSEN 1984: 43, 126-127, Plate 12; LARSEN 1990: 90-91, Plate 6; LARSEN 1991: Plate 25; BENYAMINI 1990: 179 [*jesous*] & 181 [*ubaldus*].
2. male genitalia : STEMPFFER 1967: 251, fig. 216 [*ubaldus*]; ELIOT 1973: 493, fig. 114 [*jesous*]; HIGGINS 1975: 120, text-fig. 146 [*jesous*]; 121, text-fig. 147 [*ubaldus*].
3. androconial scale : ELIOT 1973: 498-499, fig. 149 [*ubaldus*]; HIGGINS 1975: 120, text-fig. 146 [*jesous*]; 121, text-fig. 147 [*ubaldus*].

We illustrate both the upper- and underside of one of the specimens of *A. ubaldus* from Gran Canaria (figs 1 and 2 of the present publication).

A. ubaldus is widely distributed in dry tropical Africa, Arabia and India and is closely linked to the presence of *Acacia* spp. trees, that are the larval host-plants as well as the foodplants for the adults, that swarm around or inside the crowns of the trees, often settling on flowers or on the branches (HINTON 1951: 146; RUNGS 1981: 454; PITTAWAY 1985: 188; LARSEN 1980: 173, 1982: 48-49, 1983: 404, 1984: 43, 1986: 67, 1990: 44, 1991: 240; LARSEN & LARSEN 1980: 64-65; LARSEN & NAKAMURA 1983: 189). The larvae are attended by ants of the genera *Camponotus* and *Prenolepis* (HINTON l.c.: 146). The butterfly occurs in very arid, mostly subdesert habitats and most probably flies throughout the year (see PITTAWAY 1985: 188).

At the time of writing the present note (August 1992) we have no personal experience with *A. ubaldus* in the field, nor did we have the opportunity to discuss with the collector of the material originating from Gran Canaria. Nevertheless, considering the apparent obligate association of *A. ubaldus* with *Acacia* spp. trees, as emerges after consulting all the available literary sources without exception, it may be assumed that this is also the case at Playa del Inglés on Gran Canaria. Presumably, *Acacia* sp. is grown there as an ornamental tree, but perhaps *Acacia* spp. occur in the wild as well in other localities on Gran Canaria and the other Canary Islands. At present it is impossible to state whether the presence of *A. ubaldus* on Gran Canaria in April 1992 was either a temporary, perhaps even an exceptional, event, or if the species is established here on a more permanent basis.

It would be challenging for any lepidopterist to investigate systematically any *Acacia* sp. tree one encounters on Gran Canaria (or any other island of the archipelago) as to the possible presence there of *A. ubaldus* in the future. It is quite possible that more new records of this butterfly from there will become available, and we seriously consider the possibility that *A. jesus* may also turn up on any of these islands.

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