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***ANTHENE HELPSI* sp. nov.**  
**A REMARKABLE NEW LYCAENID FROM GHANA**  
**(LEPIDOPTERA: LYCAENIDAE)**

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### **Introduction**

When I visited Major Tim HELPS in Accra, Ghana for the first time, he had just finished a large display case with a selection of about 100 Ghana butterflies. He was much taken aback when, after having been in the house for only a few minutes, I focused on one the smallest and said: 'Tim, I'm almost certain that one is new to science!'

The butterfly was a member of the large genus *Anthene* with the pattern of *A. scintillula* Holland, 1891 but in dull cream instead of the fiery orange of that species. The underside seemed too contrasting for the specimen simply to be an albino, but I did warn that with single specimens this was always a possibility. Major HELPS went back to the exact locality the following week-end and managed to collect two additional males and a female, a remarkable stroke of luck! The orange *Anthene* are generally very elusive and difficult to come by, though sometimes turning up in numbers when they do. The habitat was a small, not very sunlit, clearing in primary forest, next to a stream.

Since then T. HELPS, T. B. LARSEN, and S. C. COLLINS have all visited the locality on several occasions without finding additional specimens. C. BELCASTRO (pers. comm.) has previously collected at the exact spot, and so most probably has Father T. MAESSEN, without finding it.

Further study showed significant genitalic differences in relation to *A. scintillula*, known from the same locality, and there is no doubt that it is a distinct species, which is hereby described:

***Anthene helpsi* sp. nov.** (Fig. 1)

*Male upperside*: The entire forewing is cream except for slight dark suffusion along the costa and a narrow black margin, widening very slightly towards the costa. The hindwing is also cream, with a black base, costa, and abdominal fold. There is also a narrow black margin and two distinct tornal spots. The disposition of the dark marking is exactly as in *A. scintillula*. The ground-colour immediately distinguishes it from all *Anthene* species at a glance.

*Male underside*: The underside is also similar to that of *A. scintillula* but the light markings are whitish rather than yellow. The light markings are somewhat wider.

*Female upperside*: The single female, in very poor condition, is brown above. On the forewing a cream discal patch takes up a third of the total wing surface, much as in *A. bitje*

Druce, 1910. The hindwing has a cream postdiscal patch, properly defined only between veins 4 and 6, distinctly smaller than in *A. bitje*.

*Female underside*: The underside is whitish and the dark markings are much more washed out than in the male; it is the lightest of all members of the group.

*Male genitalia*: The male genitalia are of the usual *Anthene* configuration but differ significantly from those of *A. scintillula* (fig. 2) (Larsen gen AYB - to be renumbered by The Natural History Museum, London). Both the subunci and uncus lobes differ materially and the valves are completely different.

*Male holotype*: Atewa Range, Kibi, Ghana, 9.i.1993 (T. G. P. Helps leg.) (in The Natural History Museum, London).

*Paratypes*: Two males and one female, same data but 21.iii.1993 (one male and one female in The Natural History Museum, London, one male in coll. Helps).

One further member of the *A. scintillula*-group, *A. aurea* Bethune-Baker, 1910 may also occur in the area (it was described from Begoro in western Ghana). However, material from Sierra Leone is intermediate between *A. scintillula* and *A. aurea* and I suspect that D'ABRERA (1980) is correct in thinking that *A. aurea* is a synonym of *A. scintillula*.

[*Anthene scintillula aurea* was found at Kibi, Atewa and is best considered a valid West African subspecies]

## Discussion

A single male of this amazing butterfly might have been taken as an albinistic *A. scintillula*, a species also flying on the Atewa Range. Four consistent specimens on two occasions would rule this out, even were the genitalic differences less decisive than they are.

The Atewa Range at Kibi is a virtual treasure house of butterflies. At least 460 species are known with certainty from there and the true total will almost certainly surpass 600. Many of the rarest West African butterflies have been recorded there. The remaining forest lies on a bauxite hill at an altitude of 750 - 850 metres, one of the highest and coolest points in Ghana. The forest is classified as *upland evergreen forest* by HALL & SWAINE (1981) and is both wetter and cooler than surrounding forests. *Mylothris atewa* Berger, 1980 is an endemic species, and *Acraea kraka kibi* Usher, 1986 seems to be an endemic subspecies. A number of other Ghana butterflies appear to be limited to the Atewa Range, possibly associated with the montane conditions. I Had expected *Anthene helpsi* to be yet another Atewa endemic, but while the manuscript was in press, C. Belcastro sent me a photograph of a specimen from Banco, near Abidjan which was collected in 1965.

The likely explanation for this endemism and faunal richness is that the Atewa Range at various times has acted as a refuge for forest species when the Dahomey Gap of savannah country was wider than it is today.

The forests of the Atewa Range deserve the status of a full National Park. Parts of it has till recently been exploited by selective logging. However, the Forestry Department has now placed it on a list of special biological reserves, not subject to exploitation.

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**References:**

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Fig. 1. Male upperside (left) and underside (right) of *Anthene helpsi*.

Fig. 2. The male genitalia of *Anthene helpsi* (TBL AYB) (right) and of *A. scintillula* (SCC 184) from Congo (left) for comparison [drawing not available].