



A new species of *Pheles* Herrich–Schaeffer from Northeast Brazil (Lepidoptera, Riodinidae)

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Abstract

A new species of Riodinidae, *Pheles caatingensis* Callaghan & Nobre, **sp. nov.** from Ceará and Pernambuco State in Brazil is described, along with its habitat, behavior and taxonomic differences with other members of the genus *Pheles*. Notes are included on distribution and mimetic relationships with other sympatric insects.

Key words: Caatinga, Neotropics, taxonomy, butterflies, Northeast of Brazil, mimicry.

Resumo

Uma nova espécie de Riodinidae, *Pheles caatingensis* Callaghan & Nobre, **sp. nov.** é descrita, juntamente com seu habitat, comportamento e diferenças taxonômicas em relação a outros membros do gênero *Pheles*. São fornecidas notas sobre sua distribuição e relações miméticas com outros insetos simpátricos.

Palavras-chave: Caatinga, Neotrópicos, taxonomia, borboletas, Nordeste brasileiro, mimetismo.

Introduction

The region of xeric vegetation in the Northeast of Brazil in the interior of the States of Bahia, Sergipe, Alagoas, Pernambuco, Paraíba, Rio Grande do Norte, Piauí and Ceará, referred to as the Caatinga Province (Morrone 2006) is proving to be an endemic area in its own right. Most studies on Lepidoptera to date have concentrated on the areas of greater species diversity like the northern extension of the Atlantic forest (Kesselring and Ebert 1979), and the extension of the Amazon region into the northeastern state of Maranhão (Jaffret and Martins 2008). The butterfly fauna of the dry interior, in particular the drainages of the Rio São Francisco and Rio Paranaíba has been investigated only on occasional trips by collectors from outside the region, especially in the peripheral areas which have resulted in new taxa and biogeographic information. (Callaghan 2001; Callaghan and Soares 2001; Jaffret and Martins 2008). Studies concentrating specifically on the Caatinga fauna have only been recently initiated by the second author with his list of species of Catimbau National Park in Pernambuco (Nobre *et al.* 2008).

The story of *Pheles caatingensis* **sp. nov.** begins with a survey initiated by CEMFAUNA (Centro de Conservação e Manejo de Fauna da Caatinga) of the flora and fauna of a small river, the Riacho dos Porcos in the Municipality of Brejo Santo, Ceará, in preparation for the construction of a dam which would inundate a part of the existing gallery forest. In surveying the Lepidoptera in the affected area, the second author collected a small riodinid which was subsequently identified as a new species. As a result of the importance of this discovery, the Ministry of National Integration intervened and the placement of the dam was changed in order to avoid affecting this critical habitat. The north wall of the dam was moved so that only an altered habitat area upstream from the type locality will be inundated.

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