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Dedicated to Professor Dr. H. Engel

*Antichloris eriphia* (J. C. Fabricius, 1777) (Lepidoptera, Ctenuchidae) imported into the Netherlands with bananas

B. J. LEMPKE

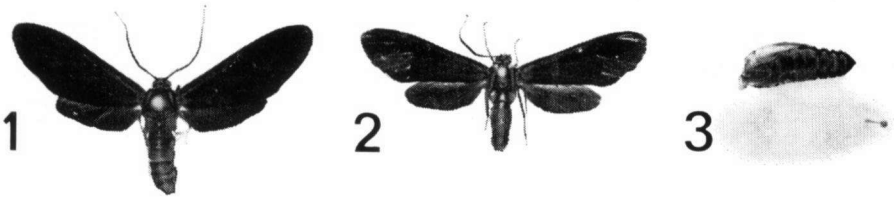
## ABSTRACT

In 1965 and 1966 four specimens of the South American moth, *Antichloris eriphia* (J. C. Fabricius, 1777) were met with in the Netherlands. They had been imported with bananas.

Insects are regularly imported into the Netherlands by means of the goods shipped from other countries. The reports of the Plant Protection Service mention them practically every year. But it is only very seldom that we meet with a macrolepidopteron among them. This can be easily understood. If we except plants (which are checked on importation), the ships seldom contain goods on which caterpillars of these insects can thrive. And moths which might accidentally hide in the holds of the ships when they are loaded, as a rule will immediately escape when the hatches are opened and the work in the holds starts.

It is therefore the more remarkable that in a rather limited period (December 1965 to September 1966) no less than four specimens of one and the same species of moth from tropical America fell into the hands of collectors. Their appearance made it clear at once that they belonged to the family Ctenuchidae (formerly Amatidae or Syntomidae), of which only one species belongs to the Dutch fauna, viz., *Amata phegea* L. But in tropical America it is represented by a great number of species, which not seldom resemble each other very closely. A modern monograph with figures of genitalia does not exist. The only work which gives a general survey of the American species is vol. 6 (1) of Seitz (1915), *Gross-Schmetterlinge der Erde (Bombyces et Sphinges americanae)*, but very often only a few lines are dedicated to each species and although many of them are figured in colours, one is often in doubt whether the determination is correct if one cannot dispose of a reliable collection to compare with.

I therefore sent all specimens to Mr. F. Daniel, Zoologische Sammlung des Bayerischen Staates, Munich, who kindly replied me, that they are two males and two females of *Antichloris eriphia* (Fabricius), a wide spread species in South America.



FIGS. 1—3. *Antichloris eriphia* (J. C. Fabricius, 1777) 1, male; 2, female; 3, cocoon and chrysalis. (Photographs of J. Huisenga).

Seitz (1. c. : 136) gives a good description of the moth (for the greater part copied from Hampson, Catal. Lep. Phalaenae, 1: 400, 1898). The ground colour of wings and body is black. The fore wings show a dark green sheen, especially along the nervures and in the whole distal part. In the hind wings this colour is only seen in a narrow band along the outer margin. In front of the thorax are two red points. The abdomen has a very distinct green sheen, paler than on the wings, and segment 2 possesses on both sides a clear white point.

The ♂ can easily be distinguished from the ♀ by the more strongly feathered antennae, by the hind wings the costal part of which is pale grey (in the specimen figured not to be seen because these wings are too much covered by the fore wings) and by the white back side of their hind legs.

The work cited gives good coloured figures on plate 20 row k fig. 3 (♂) and fig. 4 (♀).

The four specimens caught in the Netherlands are the following:

1. ♂, found by Mr. E. Houkes in Amsterdam among bananas imported from Columbia, on December 12, 1965.

2. ♀, caught by Mr. J. Verhoeff in the open at Elst (prov. of Gelderland) on March 17, 1966.

3. ♀, found by a greengrocer at Burgh (prov. of Zeeland) among bananas in his shop and given to Mr. J. P. C. Boot, in May, 1966.

4. ♂, bred on September 27, 1966, from a pupa found among bananas in a greengrocer's at Bergen op Zoom (prov. of Noord-Brabant) on September 11.

Of three of these specimens it is quite certain that they were imported with bananas and we may take it for granted that the fourth arrived in the Netherlands in the same way.

Seitz gives as area of distribution: South America from Venezuela to Paraguay, and Trinidad. The collection of the Amsterdam Zoölogisch Museum contains specimens from Jaragua do Sul (Brasil), Cayenne in French Guyana and the environs of Paramaribo in Surinam.

As regards the four specimens mentioned above only the country of origin of the Amsterdam specimen is known with certainty. The bananas among which it was found originated from the plantations of the firm of Fyffes and these are situated in the republic of Colombia, as Mr. Houkes informed me. Most probably the other three specimens came from the same country, as Fyffes bananas (now called Chiquita bananas) are among the most imported in the Netherlands.

Nothing is mentioned in "Seitz" about the biology of the species, nor is there a description of the caterpillar. But the circumstances under which the specimens were met with in the Netherlands strongly suggest, that the species has something to do with bananas. Probably this is a (or the) food plant of the caterpillar.

The cocoon which was found at Bergen op Zoom, is of a clear yellow densely woven silk. The (empty) chrysalis is of a brown colour and has an undivided stumpy cremaster.

The chance that new finds of the moth will be mentioned in the future is not very great. Mr. Houkes informed me, that formerly the bananas were shipped in whole bunches, packed in plastic sacks (with holes in them) or unpacked. That in this way many insects, spiders, little snakes etc. could reach our country, is clear. After arrival the bananas went to heating rooms, were they ripened and where the temperature was such that chrysalids might hatch.

At present however the bananas are cut from the bunches on the plantations and packed in boxes, which gives an enormous saving of cubage and weight. Before packing they are washed and treated with a mould preventing chemical. In this way we may only expect insects here which creep into the boxes after these manipulations. And it is not very likely that *Antichloris eriphia* will be among them!

The specimens taken at Burgh and Amsterdam were kindly presented to the collection of the Amsterdam Zoölogisch Museum.

In conclusion I wish to express my thanks to Mr. Daniel for the determination of the species and to Mr. J. Huisenga for the excellent photos he made for me.

Mr. B. J. Lempke  
Zoölogisch Museum der Universiteit van Amsterdam  
Entomologische Afdeling  
Zeeburgerdijk 21  
Amsterdam-C. — The Netherlands