

Nature Notes

Anartia amathea (Linnaeus) (Lepidoptera, Nymphalidae) : a striking aberration found in Trinidad, West Indies

Trinidad experienced an abnormal wet season in 2022, with the typical ‘Petit Careme’ (break in the rainfall) being absent. This no doubt affected butterfly numbers, which were noticeably lower than usual in late September/early October. The *Anartia amathea* (Linnaeus), however, which are always a lovely and welcome sight, were abundant. Barcant (1970) stated that it was “easily the commonest butterfly in Trinidad, inhabiting every nook and corner of the island where flowers bloom”. Despite being so common, the male in particular is a most handsome butterfly with its bold red coloration against a black background, the female being more subdued. Since I first started studying Trinidad butterflies in the mid-1990s, I must have seen many thousands of this butterfly, yet I have never seen any significant variation in their markings. Some Trinidad specimens with regular markings are shown below in Fig.1.

On 1 October 2022 at around mid-day, I was studying butterflies along a track in Inniss Field, South Trinidad when I came across the melanic form shown in Fig.2. on on flowers of the Railway Daisy/Spanish Needle *Bidens alba*.



Fig. 1. Specimens of typical *Anartia amathea* from Trinidad. Male (left), female (right), dorsal views (top), ventral views (bottom).



Fig. 2. Male *Anartia amathea*, melanic form, Innis field October 2022, dorsal (left) and ventral (right) views.



Fig. 3. Male *Anartia amathea*, melanic form dorsal view; Guayaguayare September 1932 (Angostura-Barcant Collection).

There is a similar aberration held in the Angostura-Barcant collection, shown here in Fig.3. This was found by Malcolm Barcant at Guayaguayare, Trinidad, September 1932 and marked as ‘rare aberration’. In addition, Scott Alston Smith (personal communication) advises that he has seen a totally black aberration of *A. amathea* from Trinidad in the collection of the late Clive Ulrich. Thus, it seems that despite the vast numbers of this butterfly seen in Trinidad and Tobago, aberrations are rarely encountered.

REFERENCES

Barcant, M. 1970. Butterflies of Trinidad and Tobago. London: Collins. 314 p.

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