

First record of *Azanus jesous* (Stoll, 1782) in Algeria (Lepidoptera: Lycaenidae)

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Abstract

Azanus jesous (Stoll, 1782) is common in arid areas of Africa, the Middle East, the Mediterranean and southern Asia. This first record of the species in Algeria is near the city of Mostaganem, located in the country's northwest. This discovery supports the biogeographical importance of Algeria to the continent of Africa. This observation would indicate that the species' distribution range has expanded into northern Africa, where it is probably attracted there by the presence of exotic plants such as *Acacia* in urban areas.

Keywords: Lepidoptera, Lycaenidae, *Azanus jesous*, distribution range, Algeria.

Primer registro de *Azanus jesous* (Stoll, 1782) in Argelia (Lepidoptera: Lycaenidae)

Resumen

Azanus jesous (Stoll, 1782) es común en las zonas áridas de África, Oriente Medio, el Mediterráneo y el sur de Asia. El primer registro de esta especie en Argelia es cerca de la ciudad de Mostaganem, situada en el noroeste del país. Esta observación indicaría que el área de distribución de la especie se ha ampliado al norte de África, donde probablemente se ve atraída por la presencia de plantas exóticas como la *Acacia* en zonas urbanas.

Palabras clave: Lepidoptera, Lycaenidae, *Azanus jesous*, rango dedistribución, Argelia.

Introduction

There are ten species in the genus *Azanus* Moore, 1881, the majority of which are utilizing *Acacia* as host plants. They have, however, also been observed on Fabaceae family plants (D'Abbrera, 2009). Two of these butterflies are endemic to Madagascar, and a third is found throughout the equatorial forest belt of Africa (Larsen, 2005). These species have small heads, palps are well-developed, thin antennae, and an apical segment that is flattened (Caporale & Guidi, 2013). The abdomen is long and thin, the thorax is strong, and the legs are thin. The wings are well-developed. The forewings are long and extended, have a sharp apex, and a slightly curved costal margin. The slightly rounded hindwings suggest the presence of rudimentary tails (Seitz, 1911).

During a visit to Mostaganem (Northwest Algeria) on November 12, 2022, W. Soukkou took a photograph of *Azanus jesous* (Stoll, 1782) perched on a *Salsola kali* L. plant, an atypical habitat for the species, which is mainly observed on *Acacia* plants (Tennent, 1996). One of the authors, A. Hadoun, validated the identification using descriptions of the many species of the genus *Azanus* sp. (Tennent, 1996; Tolman & Lewington, 2014). The photographs taken show characteristic black spots on the

underside of the forewing, as well as typical spots on the marginal area of the hindwing, with a large black spot in sixth position (e6) (Figure 1).

Azanus jesous, whose sex was not determined, was observed in an urban area of Mostaganem (35°55' 15.70"N, 0°6' 5.65"E, 69 m, Figure 2). River tamarind trees (*Leucaena leucocephala* (Lam.) De Wit) and a few *Salsola kali* and *Erigeron bonariensis* (L.) plants dominated this green space.

This is the first record of the species in Algeria. Its distribution range is fragmented, despite being widely distributed in arid regions of Africa, the Middle East, the Mediterranean and southern Asia. In North Africa, *Azanus jesous* mainly observed in Morocco, especially in the southwest of the country (Tennent, 1996; Verovnik et al. 2018) and south of Spain (Holmes, 2002). It can be found abundant in the plains towards the north of Marrakech but is less common at high altitudes in the High and Anti-Atlas (Tennent, 1996).

This is the first documented record for Algeria (Tennent, 1996; Samraoui et al. 1998; Remini & Moulai, 2015; Kacha et al. 2017; Berkane & Moulai, 2021). This original finding may be related to recent trends in urban planning and the introduction of exotic plants such as *Acacia* into urban's green space. Therefore, it is important to monitor Lepidoptera populations throughout the country to fill any ecological and distribution knowledge gaps.

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