

The larval host-plant of *Agriades pyrenaicus* (Boisduval, 1840) in Greece (Lepidoptera: Lycaenidae)

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Abstract. The larval host-plant of *Agriades pyrenaicus* (Boisduval, 1840) on the Orvilos mountain of northern Greece has been determined as *Androsace villosa* L.

Samenvatting. De voedselplant van *Agriades pyrenaicus* (Boisduval, 1840) in Griekenland (Lepidoptera: Lycaenidae)
Tijdens een bezoek aan Mt. Orvilos in Noord-Griekenland kon de auteur vaststellen dat de rups van *Agriades pyrenaicus* leeft op *Androsace villosa* L. (Primulaceae).

Résumé. La plante-hôte d'*Agriades pyrenaicus* (Boisduval, 1840) sur le Mont Orvilos dans le nord de la Grèce (Lepidoptera: Lycaenidae)
Pendant une visite au Mont Orvilos dans le nord de la Grèce, l'auteur a pu constater que la chenille d'*Agriades pyrenaicus* se nourrit d'*Androsace villosa* L. (Primulaceae).

Key words: *Agriades pyrenaicus* - larval host-plant - *Androsace villosa* - Mt. Orvilos - Greece

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The presence of *Agriades pyrenaicus* (Boisduval, 1840) in Greece, on Mt. Orvilos, Drama (1650-1750m), has been confirmed by Coutsis & Ghavalas (1991). This species had been recorded previously from the adjacent Mt. Alibotos on the Bulgarian side of the border (Thurner 1964).

In respect of the subspecific status of the Greek race of *Agriades pyrenaicus*, the present author defers to the position held by Coutsis & Ghavalas (*l.c.*) and refrains from venturing an opinion.

On 6th June 1993, my wife and I visited the Orvilos mountain for the purpose of locating hibernated larvae of *A. pyrenaicus*. To assist in this endeavour, a map detailing the site of capture of the adult insects had been kindly provided by John Coutsis. It was assumed that the larval host-plant was a member of the Primulaceae, possibly *Androsace villosa* L., the larval host of *A. pyrenaicus asturiensis* (Oberthur, 1910) from the Cantabrian Mts. of northern Spain (*pers. obs.*), and nominotypical *pyrenaicus* from the Pyrenees (Chapman 1916).

At 1700m, in the area where the butterflies had been found by John Coutsis and Nicos Ghavalas, a small number of non-flowering plants of *A. villosa* were soon located, but no larvae were found. However, the suspected host-plant became progressively commoner at higher altitudes and after a prolonged search at 1800-2100m, a half-grown larva was uncovered at the base of a small, flowering specimen of *A. villosa* growing in a rock crevice at 1900m. No ants were found in the vicinity of the larva, nor was an association with ants expected in view of the apparent larval mymecoxeny of nominotypical *pyrenaicus* observed by (Chapman *l.c.*).

The larva continued to feed on the leaf rosettes and flowers until 13th June when it entered the pre-pupal phase: pupation occurred the following day and a female emerged on the 28th June. The full-grown larva, pupa and the resulting female butterfly are shown in Plate 1.

Plate 1



Figs 1-6: *Agriades pyrenaicus* (Boisduval, 1840), Greece, Mt. Orvilos, Drama, 1650-2100 m: Fig. 1. Larva lateral view; Fig. 2. Larva dorsal view; Fig. 3. Pupa; Fig. 4. Larval host-plant, *Androsace villosa* L.; Fig. 5. female butterfly, underside; Fig. 6. biotope at 2000 m.

The failure to record the butterfly during return visits to Mt. Orvilos on the 2nd and 4th July was attributed to a delayed emergence due to the general retardation of the season, at least, relative to that in which the adult insects were discovered on 30th June 1991. It may be relevant to note in this context, that, on 6th June, *Coenonympha rhodopenis* Elwes was at the beginning of its emergence at 1500m: whilst its presence here is not unexpected, this interesting butterfly does not appear to have been reported from this mountain. A few worn *Euchloe penia* Freyer, previously recorded from this locality by Fuchs (1992), were noted at 1300-1600m.

Interestingly, Polunin (1980) and Tutin *et al.* (1964) cite only the central region of the country in referring to the distribution of *A. villosa* in Greece, indicating, therefore, the theoretical possibility of a wider occurrence of *A. pyrenaicus*.

Acknowledgement

The author is indebted to Dr. Frank Bisby of the Department of Botanical Taxonomy, University of Southampton, for confirming the identity of *Androsace villosa* L.

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