

Genus *Pelopidas* Walker, 1870

Entomologist 5: 56 (48-57).

Type-species: *Pelopidas midea* Walker, by monotypy.

[*P. midea* was synonymized with *P. thrax* by Evans (1937)]

= *Chapra* Moore, 1881 *in* Moore, [1880-2]. *The lepidoptera of Ceylon* 1: 169 (190 pp.). London. Type-species: *Hesperia mathias* Fabricius, by original designation.

An Old World genus of 11 species (Yuan *et al.*, 2010). The two Afrotropical species (*mathias* and *thrax*) both extend extraliminally. *Pelopidas* has a cell spot on the hind wing underside, which is absent in *Borbo*. The mid tibiae of *Pelopidas* are heavily spined but unspined or weakly spined in *Borbo*. The males of the two African species of *Pelopidas* have a discal stigma on the forewing upperside but *Borbo* species do not (Evans, 1949a).

**Pelopidas mathias* (Fabricius, 1798)# Black-branded Swift



Mating pair of the Black-branded Swift (*Pelopidas mathias*).
Image courtesy Bart Wursten.

Hesperia mathias Fabricius, 1798. *Supplementum entomologiae systematica*: 433 (572 pp.). Hafniae.

Pelopidas mathias Fabricius. Swanepoel, 1953a.

Pelopidas mathias (Fabricius, 1798). Dickson & Kroon, 1978.

Pelopidas mathias (Fabricius, 1798). Pringle *et al.*, 1994: 333.



Pelopidas mathias mathias. Male (Wingspan 37 mm). Left – upperside; right – underside.
Utopia Resort, North West Province, South Africa. 15 June 2003. J. Dobson.
Images M. Williams ex J. Dobson Collection.



Pelopidas mathias mathias. Female (Wingspan 40 mm). Left – upperside; right – underside.
Black Rock, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. 19 April 2003. J. Dobson.
Images M. Williams ex J. Dobson Collection.

Type locality: “in India”.

Diagnosis: On the upperside of the forewing of the male there is a black sex-brand (Pringle *et al.*, 1994).

Distribution: Sub-Saharan Africa, including Senegal, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau (Mendes *et al.*, 2007), Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, Benin (Fermon *et al.*, 2001), Nigeria, Gabon, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana (north and east), Namibia (north), South Africa (Limpopo Province; Mpumalanga; North West Province, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape Province), Swaziland, much of Arabia, Madagascar, Comoro Islands, Seychelles.

Extralimitally it is found in the Oriental Region, as far east as New Guinea. Some of these are regarded as subspecific, e.g. *oberthueri* Evans from east Asia and *repetita* Butler from Papua New Guinea.

Habitat: Moist savanna and open forest. In Madagascar in transformed grassland, forest margins and croplands (Lees *et al.*, 2003). In Tanzania from sea-level to 2 100 m (Kielland, 1990d).

Habits: A common skipper (Larsen, 2005a). The flight is very fast but specimens often feed from flowers or perch, usually low down, on vegetation to bask in the sun. Larsen (2005a) noted that they are partial to the flowers of *Tridax*. Males establish territories on hilltops, or in clearings and the edges of the bush. Territorial contests between males are conducted at great speed (Larsen, 1991c). It has a tendency to migrate (Larsen, 1991c). On hot days it seeks out shady places in which to rest (Larsen, 2005a).

Flight period: All year but scarcer during winter (Pringle *et al.*, 1994).

Early stages:

Clark, in Dickson & Kroon, 1978: plate 31 [as *Pelopidas mathias*; Durban, KwaZulu-Natal].

Nakasuji, 1987.

Litsinger *et al.*, 1994.

Henning, Henning, Joannou & Woodhall, 1997: 187 (photograph of final instar larva).

Cock & Congdon, 2012: 14 [larva & pupa]

Larval food – Afrotropical records (for records from Asia see Cock & Congdon, 2012):

Andropogon species (Poaceae) [Larsen, 1991c: 432].

Ehrharta erecta Lam. (Poaceae) [Murray, 1959].

Hyparrhenia diplandra (Hack.) Stapf (Poaceae) [Vuattoux, 1999; Ivory Coast].

Imperata cylindrica (L.) Raeusch. (Poaceae) [Vuattoux, 1999; Ivory Coast].

Megathyrsus maximus (Jacq.) B.K. Simon & S.W.L. Jacobs (= *Panicum maximum* Jacq.) [Cock & Congdon, 2012; Zimbabwe].

Oryza sativa L. (Poaceae) (rice) [Descamps, 1956; Cameroon].

Panicum species (Poaceae) [Larsen, 1991c: 432].

Saccharum officinarum L. (Poaceae) (sugar-cane) [Carnegie *et al.*, 1974; South Africa].

Sorghum bicolor (L.) Moench (Poaceae) (sorghum) [Cock & Congdon, 2012; Kenya].

Triticum aestivum L. (Poaceae) (wheat) [Carvalho & Cardoso, 1971; Angola].

Zea mays L. (Poaceae) (maize) [Cock & Congdon, 2012; Kenya].

Pelopidas mathias mathias (Fabricius, 1798)#

Hesperia mathias Fabricius, 1798. *Supplementum entomologiae systematica*: 433 (572 pp.). Hafniae.

Pelopidas mathias Fabricius. Swanepoel, 1953a.

Pelopidas mathias (Fabricius, 1798). Dickson & Kroon, 1978.

Pelopidas mathias (Fabricius, 1798). Pringle *et al.*, 1994: 333.



Pelopidas mathias mathias. Male (Wingspan 37 mm). Left – upperside; right – underside.
Utopia Resort, North West Province, South Africa. 15 June 2003. J. Dobson.
Images M. Williams ex J. Dobson Collection.



Pelopidas mathias mathias. Female (Wingspan 40 mm). Left – upperside; right – underside.
Black Rock, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. 19 April 2003. J. Dobson.
Images M. Williams ex J. Dobson Collection.

Type locality: “in India”.

Distribution: Sub-Saharan Africa, including Senegal, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau (Mendes *et al.*, 2007), Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, Benin (Fermon *et al.*, 2001), Nigeria, Gabon, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana (north and east), Namibia (north), South Africa (Limpopo Province; Mpumalanga; North West Province, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape Province), Swaziland, much of Arabia, Madagascar, Comoro Islands, Seychelles.

Specific localities:

Ghana – Bobiri Butterfly Sanctuary (Larsen *et al.*, 2007); Boabeng-Fiema Monkey Sanctuary (Larsen *et al.*, 2009).

Benin – Noyau Central, Lama Forest (Fermon *et al.*, 2001).

Gabon – Iguela (van de Weghe, 2010); Camp PPG, Bateke Plateau (van de Weghe, 2010).

Tanzania – Widespread, including Pemba Island (Kielland, 1990d); Katavi National Park (Fitzherbert *et al.*, 2006).

Zambia – Ikelenge (Heath *et al.*, 2002); Mwinilunga (Heath *et al.*, 2002); Lumwana River (Heath *et al.*, 2002); Chingola (Heath *et al.*, 2002); Mufulira (Heath *et al.*, 2002); Ndola (Heath *et al.*, 2002); Mpongwe (Heath *et al.*, 2002); Mumbwa (Heath *et al.*, 2002); Lusaka (Heath *et al.*, 2002); Victoria Falls (Heath *et al.*, 2002); Chibembe (Heath *et al.*, 2002); Mbala (Heath *et al.*, 2002).

Botswana – Widespread (Larsen, 1991); Metsimaklhaba near Gaborone (Van Son, 1936); Nata (Larsen, 1991); Gweta (Larsen, 1991); Mpandama-Tenga (Larsen, 1991); Kasane (Larsen, 1991); Chobe (Larsen, 1991); Maun (Larsen, 1991); Okavango (Larsen, 1991); Shakawe (Larsen, 1991); Muhembo (Larsen, 1991); Tlokweng – single male (Larsen, 1991).

Limpopo Province – Throughout (Swanepoel, 1953); Lekgalameetse Nature Reserve (“Malta Forest”).

Mpumalanga – Throughout (Swanepoel, 1953).

North West Province – Throughout (Swanepoel, 1953); Utopia Resort (C. Dobson, 2006); Borakalalo Nature Reserve (J. Dobson, unpublished, 2009).

Gauteng – Throughout (Swanepoel, 1953).

KwaZulu-Natal – Umkomaas (Swanepoel, 1953); Durban (Swanepoel, 1953); Estcourt (Swanepoel, 1953); Eshowe (Swanepoel, 1953); St Lucia Bay (Swanepoel, 1953); Kosi Bay Nature Reserve (Pringle & Kyle, 2002); Tembe Nature Reserve (Pringle & Kyle, 2002).

Eastern Cape Province – East London (Swanepoel, 1953); Bashee River (Swanepoel, 1953); Port St Johns (Swanepoel, 1953); Cintsa East (male illustrated above).

Swaziland – Mlawula N. R. (www.sntc.org.sz).

Madagascar – Nose Be (Saalmüller, 1884).

Comoro Islands – Island of Joanna (Butler, 1879).

Seychelles – A single record from Astove, in the Aldabra group (Lionnet, 1970).

elegans Mabilé, 1877 (as sp. of *Gegenes*). *Bulletin de la Société Zoologique de France* **2**: 232 (214-240). No locality given.

umbrata Butler, 1879 (as sp. of *Pamphila*). *Annals and Magazine of Natural History* (5) **3**: 191 (186-192). Comoro Islands: “Island of Johanna”.

octofenestrata Saalmüller, 1884 (as sp. of *Hesperia*). *Abhandlungen hrsg. Von der Senskenbergischen Naturforschenden Gesellschaft* **17**: 108 (1-246). Madagascar: “N.B.”.

albirostris Mabilé 1887 *in* Grandidier, [1885-7] (as sp. of *Pamphila*). *Histoire, Physique, Naturelle et Politique de Madagascar*: 361, pl. 56a (**18** [1887]: 364 pp.; **19** [1885]: 55pls). Madagascar.

****Pelopidas thrax* (Hübner, 1821)#**
White-branded Swift



Male White-branded Swift (*Pelopidas thrax*)
Image courtesy Steve Woodhall

Gegenes thrax Hübner, 1821 in Hübner, [1819-27]. *Sammlung exotischer Schmetterlinge* **2**: pl. 150 (225 pls). Augsburg.

Pamphila mohopaani Wallengren. Trimen, 1866a. [synonym of *Pelopidas thrax*]

Pamphila mohopaani (Wallengren, 1857). Trimen & Bowker, 1889. [synonym of *Pelopidas thrax*]

Pelopidas thrax Hübner. Swanepoel, 1953a.

Pelopidas thrax inconspicua (Bertolini, 1850). Dickson & Kroon, 1978. [misspelling of author's name; synonym of *Pelopidas thrax*]

Pelopidas thrax inconspicua (Bertolini, 1850). Pringle *et al.*, 1994: 333. [synonym of *Pelopidas thrax*]



Pelopidas thrax. Male (Wingspan 44 mm). Left – upperside; right – underside.
Manguzi Forest, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. 18 April 2003. J. Dobson.
Images M. Williams ex J. Dobson Collection.



Pelopidas thrax. Female (Wingspan 50 mm). Left – upperside; right – underside.
Umtamvuna River, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. 28 April 2005. J. Dobson.
Images M. Williams ex J. Dobson Collection.

Type locality: No locality given. Probably ‘Syria’ (Evans, 1937).

Diagnosis: On the upperside of the forewing of the male there is a whitish sex-brand (Pringle *et al.*, 1994).

Distribution: Sub-Saharan Africa, including Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, Nigeria, Gabon, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana (north), Namibia, South Africa (Limpopo Province, Mpumalanga, North West Province, Gauteng, Free State Province, KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape Province, Western Cape Province, Northern Cape Province), Swaziland, southern Arabia.

Extralimital in Cyprus, Greece (Cuvelier, 2009), Egypt, Middle East, Iraq, Pakistan, and the north-western portions of the Indian subcontinent.

Specific localities:

Senegal – Cap Vert (Larsen, 2005a).

Ghana – Boabeng-Fiema Monkey Sanctuary (Larsen *et al.*, 2009).

Gabon – Iguela (van de Weghe, 2010); Lope (van de Weghe, 2010); Camp PPG, Bateke Plateau (van de Weghe, 2010).

Kenya – South Kavirondo (Larsen, 1991c); Witu (Larsen, 1991c).

Tanzania – Widespread (Kielland, 1990d); Mpanda (Kielland, 1990d); Kigoma (Kielland, 1990d); Tabora (Kielland, 1990d); Marang Forest in Mbulu (Kielland, 1990d); Katavi National Park (Fitzherbert *et al.*, 2006).

Zambia – Ikelenge (Heath *et al.*, 2002); Mwinilunga (Heath *et al.*, 2002); Kabompo River (Heath *et al.*, 2002); mid-Lunga River (Heath *et al.*, 2002); Mufulira (Heath *et al.*, 2002); Ndola (Heath *et al.*, 2002); Miengwe (Heath *et al.*, 2002); Mpongwe (Heath *et al.*, 2002); Luongo River (Heath *et al.*, 2002); Kasama (Heath *et al.*, 2002).

Mozambique – Inhambane (Bertoloni, 1850); Njesi Plateau (Congdon *et al.*, 2010).

Botswana – Mpandama-Tenga (Larsen, 1991); Kasane (Larsen, 1991); Sepupa (Larsen, 1991); Shakawe (Larsen, 1991); Muhembo (Larsen, 1991).

Limpopo Province – Throughout (Swanepoel, 1953); Doorndraai Dam Nature Reserve (Warren, 1990); Lekgalameetse Nature Reserve (“Malta Forest”); Highlands Wilderness (Bode & Bode, unpublished checklist); Soetdoring Farm [-24.561 28.233] (A. Mayer, pers comm. 2015).

Mpumalanga – Throughout (Swanepoel, 1953); Buffelspoort Nature Reserve (Williams).

North West Province – Throughout (Swanepoel, 1953); Utopia Resort (C. Dobson, 2006).

Gauteng – Throughout (Swanepoel, 1953).

Free State Province – Throughout (Swanepoel, 1953).

KwaZulu-Natal – Throughout (Swanepoel, 1953); Kosi Bay Nature Reserve (Pringle & Kyle, 2002); Tembe Nature Reserve (Pringle & Kyle, 2002); Ndumo Nature Reserve (Pringle & Kyle, 2002); Maphelane Nature Reserve (S. Woodhall, unpublished, 2009).

Eastern Cape Province – Grahamstown (Swanepoel, 1953); East London (Swanepoel, 1953); Tsomo River (Swanepoel, 1953); Bashee River (Swanepoel, 1953); Port St Johns (Swanepoel, 1953); Cintsa East (male and female illustrated above).

Western Cape Province – Knysna (Trimen, 1862); Cape Town (Swanepoel, 1953); Swellendam (Swanepoel, 1953).

Northern Cape Province – De Aar (Swanepoel, 1953).

Swaziland – Mlawula N. R. (www.sntc.org.sz).

Habitat: Moist woodland and forest margins. Occasionally found in dry savanna and grassland. Occasionally even in forest (Larsen, 2005a). In Tanzania from sea-level to 1 500 m (Kielland, 1990d).

Habits: A fairly common butterfly (Larsen, 2005a). The flight is very fast but specimens often feed from flowers and sometimes mud-puddle. Specimens can also be found perched on low vegetation, basking in the sun with half-opened wings. Males hilltop (from as early as 07:00) but also select territories on the edges of forest and bush. Males are very aggressive and contests are at high speed, the contenders remaining in close physical proximity despite their speed (Larsen, 2005a). It appears to have some migratory capacity (Larsen, 2005a).

Flight period: All year but scarcer in winter (Pringle *et al.*, 1994).

Early stages:

Clark, in Dickson & Kroon, 1978: p.268; plate 32 [as *Pelopidas thrax inconspicua*; (apparently) from near Grahamstown, Eastern Cape].

Larva: 5-instar Group. 1st instar 1.5 growing to 3 mm in 11 days; 2nd instar 3 growing to 5 mm in 8 to 20 days; 3rd instar 5 growing to 9 mm in 5 to 20 days; 4th instar 9 growing to 12 mm in 9 to 20 days; 5th instar 12 growing to 21 mm in 15 to 20 days. *6-instar Group.* 1st instar 1.5 growing to 3 mm in 11 days; 2nd instar 3 growing to 4.5 mm in 8 to 20 days; 3rd instar 4.5 growing to 7 mm in 5 to 20 days; 4th instar 7 growing to 10 mm in 9 to 20 days; 5th instar 10 growing to 17 mm in 15 to 20 days; 6th instar 17 growing to 21 mm in 15 to 20 days.

Makris, 2003 [Cyprus]

Cock, [2010] [Oman].

Cock & Congdon, 2012: 17 [larva and pupa]

Larval food:

Ehrharta erecta (Lam.) (Poaceae) [Murray, 1959; in captivity].

Imperata cylindrica (L.) Raeusch. (Poaceae) [Dickson & Kroon, 1978: 199; as *Imperata arundinacea* Andersson].

Oryza species (Poaceae) [Larsen, 1991c: 432].

Megathyrus maximus (Jacq.) B.K. Simon & S.W.L. Jacobs (= *Panicum maximum* Jacq.) (Poaceae) [Otto *et al.*, 2013: 72].

Saccharum kajkaiense and/or *Tripidium ravennae* (L.) H. Scholz (= *Saccharum ravennae* (L.) L.) (Poaceae) [Cock, 2010; Hajar Mountains, Oman].

Relevant literature:

Cock, [2010] [Biology in Oman].

Cuvelier, 2009 [Distribution in Greece].

inconspicua Bertoloni, 1850 (as sp. of *Hesperia*). *Memorie della Reale Accademia del Scienze dell'Instituto di Bologna. Class de Scienze Fisiche. Bologna* (1) **2**: 179 (165-188). Mozambique: "Inhambane". Synonymized with *Pelopidas thrax* (Huebner, 1821) by Larsen, 2005a: 541, **syn. nov.**

mohopaani Wallengren, 1857 (as sp. of *Hesperia*). *Öfversigt af Kongl. Vetenskaps-Akademiens Förhandlingar. Stockholm* annis 1838-1845. *Collecta* (n.s.) **2** (4): 48 (55 pp.). South Africa: "Caffraria".

micipsa Trimen, 1862 (as sp. of *Pamphilia*). *Transactions of the Entomological Society of London* (3) **1**:

290 (279-291). South Africa: “Knysna”.

midea Walker, 1870 (as sp. of *Pelopidas*). *Entomologist* **5**: 56 (48-57). Egypt: “Cairo”.

lodra Plötz, 1879 (as sp. of *Hesperia*). *Stettiner Entomologische Zeitung* **40**: 355 (353-364). “Eningo”.