

## Genus *Zeritis* Boisduval, 1836 Checkered Gems

*In*: [Roret, Suites à Buffon] *Histoire naturelle des Insectes. Species général des Lépidopteres* 1: pl. 22 (690 pp.). Paris.

Type species: *Zeritis neriene* Boisduval 1836, by monotypy.



*Zeritis fontainei*, Angola. Photographed by Christopher Willis.

The genus *Zeritis* belongs to the Family Lycaenidae Leach, 1815; Subfamily Aphnaeinae Distant, 1884; Tribe Axiocersini Grishin, 2023a. (Zhang *et al.* 2023a. Butterfly Classification and Species Discovery Using Genomics". *The Taxonomic Report of the International Lepidoptera Survey* 11 (3): 36). The other genus in the Tribe Axiocersini in the Afrotropical Region is *Axiocerces*.

*Zeritis* (**Checkered Gems**) is a purely Afrotropical genus containing four species. The 'Checkered Gems' have genitalia that show affinity to those of the genus *Axiocerces* but the flight is slower and closer to the ground (Larsen, 2005a).

## *Zeritis fontainei* Stempffer, 1956 Diamond Checkered Gem

*Zeritis fontainei* Stempffer, 1956. *Annales du Musée Royal du Congo Belge* (8) (Sciences zoologique) 49: 35 (54 pp.).  
*Zeritis fontainei* Stempffer, 1956. d'Abrera, 2009: 710.



*Zeritis fontainei*. Male. Left – upperside; right – underside.  
Mundwiji Plain, Mwinilunga, Zambia. 1 April 2003. A. Gardiner.  
Images M.C. Williams ex Gardiner collection.



*Zeritis fontainei*. Female. Left – upperside; right –underside.  
Mundwiji Plain, Mwinilunga, Zambia. 5 November 2006. A. Gardiner.  
Images M.C. Williams ex Gardiner collection.

**Type locality:** [Democratic Republic of Congo]: “Pic Mense, 500 m environ, 25 km est de Léopoldville”.

**Distribution:** Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, Angola.

**Specific localities:**

Democratic Republic of Congo – Pic Mense, 25 km east of Leopoldville (TL).

Zambia – Mundwiji Plain (Heath *et al.*, 2002); female specimen illustrated above); Mudri, 25 km east of Mwinilunga (male specimen illustrated above).

Angola – Tchivinguiro [15 08 15.4S 13 19 23.2E] (Willis, 2009).

**Habitat:** Nothing published.

**Habits:** Specimens are apparently rather inactive (Heath *et al.*, 2002).

**Early stages:** Nothing published.

**Larval food:** Nothing published.

**Associated ant:** Nothing published.

### *Zeritis krystyna* d’Abrera, 1980

#### Angola Checkered Gem

*Zeritis krystyna* d’Abrera, 1980. *Butterflies of the Afrotropical region*: 484 (593 pp.). Melbourne.

*Zeritis krystyna* d’Abrera, 1980. d’Abrera, 2009: 710.

**Type locality:** Angola: “Muene Indala, Angola”.

**Distribution:** Angola (central).

**Specific localities:**

Angola – Muene Indala (TL).

**Early stages:** Nothing published.

**Larval food:** Nothing published.

**Associated ant:** Nothing published.

### *Zeritis neriene* Boisduval, 1836

#### Pale Checkered Gem

*Zeritis neriene* Boisduval, 1836. *In*: [Roret, Suites à Buffon] *Histoire naturelle des Insectes. Species général des Lépidopteres* 1: pl. 22 (690 pp.). Paris.

*Zeritis neriene* Boisduval, 1936. d’Abrera, 2009: 709. [date of authorship erroneous].



*Zeritis neriene*. Male. Left – upperside; right –underside.  
Fort Portal, Uganda. 7 June 2017. J. Dobson.  
Images M.C. Williams ex Dobson collection.

**Type locality:** No locality given in description.

**Distribution:** Senegal, Gambia (Jon Baker, pers. comm, May 2020), Guinea-Bissau (Mendes *et al.*, 2008), Guinea, Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Benin (south, central), Nigeria, Niger (south), Cameroon, Central African Republic, Sudan (south), Uganda, Kenya (west).

**Specific localities:**

Senegal – Basse Casamance (Larsen, 2005a).

Gambia – Marakissa (Jon Baker, pers. comm, May 2020).

Ghana – Whydah (Butler, 1874).

Benin – see Coache *et al.*, 2017.

Nigeria – Ikoyi Island, Lagos (colony now destroyed by urban development) (Larsen, 1991c); Zuru (M. Newport, *vide* Larsen, 2005a); Anambra Creek (Larsen, 2005a); Okwangwo (C. Olory, *vide* Larsen, 2005a).

Cameroon – Demssa (Adamaua) (TL of *aurivillii*).

Sudan – Wau (TL of *pulcherrima*).

Uganda – Muzizi Forest, southern end of Lake Albert (Bethune-Baker, 1924).

Kenya – near Broderick Falls (Larsen, 1991c).

**Habitat:** Savanna; on sandy soils. Open stony ground, with short grass (Larsen, 2005a). Occasionally it has been found within the forest zone on cleared lands, for example, at Okwangwo and Anambra Creek in Nigeria (Larsen, 2005a).

**Habits:** Local and rare (Larsen, 1991c). Found in discrete colonies, as small as 100 square metres in extent. There may be many (50 or more) individuals within these small territories. Specimens spend most of the time resting on the ground, and make short flights now and again. The flight is slow and close to the ground. Small, white, low-growing flowers are visited (Larsen, 1991c; Larsen, 2005a).

**Early stages:** Nothing published.

**Larval food:** Nothing published.

**Associated ant:** Nothing published.

*amine* Butler, 1874 (as sp. of *Cigaritis*). *Transactions of the Entomological Society of London* **1874**: 533 (531-533). [Ghana]: “Whydah, on the Gold Coast”.

*aurivillii* Schultze, 1908 (as sp. of *Zeritis*). *Societas Entomologica* **23**: 131 (130-131). **Type locality:** Cameroon: “Demssa (Adamaua)”. Synonymized with *neriene* by d’Abrera (2009: 709) **syn. nov.**

*pulcherrima* Aurivillius, 1916 (as sp. of *Zeritis*). *Ark. Zool.* **10**: 4. **Type locality:** Sudan: “Ost-Sudan bei Wau”. Synonymized with *neriene* by d’Abrera (2009: 709) **syn. nov.**

*muzizii* Bethune-Baker, 1924 (as f. of *Zeritis neriene*). *Annals and Magazine of Natural History* (9) **14**: 134 (130-135). [Uganda]: “Muzizi Forest, S. end of Lake Albert, S.E. Africa”.

***Zeritis sorhagenii* (Dewitz, 1879)**  
**Scarce Checkered Gem**

*Plebeius sorhagenii* Dewitz, 1879. *Nova Acta Academiae Caesarea Leopoldino-Carolinae Germanicum Naturae Curiosorum* 4 (2): 204 (173-212).

*Zeritis sorhagenii* (Dewitz, 1879). Dickson & Kroon, 1978.

*Zeritis sorhagenii* (Dewitz, 1879). Pringle *et al.*, 1994: 174.

*Zeritis sorhagenii* Dewitz, 1879. d'Abreu, 2009: 710.



*Zeritis sorhagenii*. Male. Left – upperside; right – underside.  
Lumangwe Forest, Northern Province, Zambia. 11 April 2005. A. Gardiner.  
Images M.C. Williams ex Gardiner collection.



*Zeritis sorhagenii*. Female. Left – upperside; right – underside.  
Ikelenge Vlei, Zambia. 10 April 2002. A. Gardiner.  
Images M.C. Williams ex Gardiner collection.

**Type locality:** [Angola]: “Guinea auf dem 10E S.B., zwischen dem 17-22E O.L. von Greemw”. **Distribution:** Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo (south–Lualaba, Shaba), Zambia, Botswana (north-east).

**Specific localities:**

Zambia – Zambezi River, Ikelenge (Heath *et al.*, 2002); Kanongesha, Mwinilunga (Heath *et al.*, 2002); Lake Bangweulu (Heath *et al.*, 2002); Mbala (Heath *et al.*, 2002); Near Hillwood, Ikelenge (male illustrated above); Mulambo Falls (female illustrated above).

Botswana – Kazungula (Stevenson, 1937; single female).

**Habitat:** In understorey grass in open *Brachystegia* woodland (Heath *et al.*, 2002).

**Habits:** Occurs in very localized colonies. Specimens are apparently rather inactive (Heath *et al.*, 2002). The flight is weak (Pringle *et al.*, 1994).

**Flight period:** December to April (Heath, *vide* Pringle *et al.*, 1994).

**Early stages:** Nothing published.

**Larval food:** Nothing published.

**Associated ant:** Nothing published.