

Genus *Balenga* Grishin, 2023
Giant Twilight Skippers

Balenga Grishin, 2023a.

Type species: *Proteides balenge* Holland 1891, by original designation.

The genus *Balenga* belongs to the Family HesperIIDae Latreille, 1809; Subfamily HesperIIDae Latreille, 1809; Tribe Gretnini Grishin, 2019. The only other genus in this tribe is the type genus *Gretna*.

Balenga (Giant Twilight Skippers) is a monobasic Afrotropical genus of very large forest-dwelling hesperiids.

***Balenga balenge* (Holland, 1891)**
Giant Twilight Skipper

Proteides balenge Holland, 1891. *Entomological News* 2: 5 (3-6).

Gretna balenge (Holland, 1891).

Balenga balenge (Holland, 1891), **comb. nov.** Grishin, 2023a.



Balenga balenge balenge. Male. Left – upperside; right – underside.
Mintom, southern Cameroon. November 2014. ABRI Leg. ABRI-2019- 2576.
Images M.C. Williams ex ABRI Collection.



Gretna balenge balenge. Female. Left – upperside; right – underside.
Ebogo, Cameroon. October 2001. ABRI Coll. ABRI-2019- 2577.
Images M.C. Williams ex ABRI Collection.

Type locality: Gabon: “Benita”.

Distribution: Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, Gabon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia.

Habitat: Not a true forest species, occurring wherever suitable palms grow, for example along river banks in open situations (Congdon & Bampton, unpublished 2003).

Habits: An uncommon skipper (Larsen, 2005a) that flies at dusk. The flight is very rapid. Specimens may rest on the ground for a few seconds before dashing off again (Kielland, *vide* Congdon & Collins, 1998). They are attracted to various kinds of foul substance (Larsen, 2005a).

Early stages:

Congdon & Bampton, unpublished, 2003

The egg is very large and the whole of the shell is consumed after the larva emerges. Once it has consumed the egg shell the larva spins a shelter, in which it moults to the second instar. It then begins to feed on the host-plant. Second and subsequent larval instars have loose hairs and are covered in a white powdery substance. The pupa is unusual in that it has elaborate processes anteriorly, resembling the head of an ant lion. When disturbed the pupa vibrates violently, a behaviour presumably intended to deter predators.

Cock *et al.*, 2014: 40 [ovum, larva and pupa].

Larval food:

Dypsis lutescens (H. Wendl.) Beentje & J. Dransf. (a Madagascan palm) [Motshagen, *vide* Cock *et al.*, 2014; Nigeria].

Eremospatha species (Arecaceae) (Rattan palm) [Cock *et al.*, 2014: 40].

Raphia farinifera (Gaertn.) Hyl. (Arecaceae) [Cock *et al.*, 2014: 40].

Balenga balenge balenge (Holland, 1891)

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Type locality: Gabon: “Benita”.

Distribution: Nigeria, Cameroon, Gabon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda (west), Tanzania (north-west), Zambia (north).

Specific localities:

Gabon –

Benita

(TL).

Democratic Republic of Congo – Ituri Forest (Ducarme, 2018); Mt Mitumba (Ducarme, 2018).

Tanzania – Kere Hill, in Minziro Forest (sight records) (Congdon & Collins, 1998); Luegele River (Congdon & Bampton, unpub., 2003).

Zambia – Ikelenge (Heath *et al.*, 2002); Chikonke Stream (Congdon; female illustrated above).

Balenga balenge zowa Lindsey & Miller, 1965

Gretna balenge zowa Lindsey & Miller, 1965 *in* Fox, *et al.*, 1965. *Memoirs of the American Entomological Society* No. 19: 119 (438 pp.).

Balenga balenge zowa (Lindsey & Miller, 1965), **comb. nov.** Grishin, 2023a.

Type locality: Liberia: “Ganta”.

Distribution: Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, Benin (south).

Specific localities:

Liberia –

Ganta

(TL).

Ghana – Anfoega (Maessen, *vide* Larsen, 2005a); Bobiri Butterfly Sanctuary (Larsen *et al.*, 2007). Benin – see Coache *et al.*, 2017.