

LEPIDOPTERISTS' SOCIETY STATEMENT ON COLLECTING LEPIDOPTERA

Collecting moths and butterflies has historically been a part of many cultures worldwide. Collecting, rearing, observation, and photography are all affirmed by our inclusive Society to be legitimate activities, enabling both professional and avocational lepidopterists, individually and in cooperation, to pursue the scientifically sound study of Lepidoptera. It should be clearly stated that collecting is an essential part of many scientific studies, the knowledge from which in turn is very important in conservation of natural populations. Our responsibility to assess and preserve natural resources and to better understand and preserve biological diversity in perpetuity requires that we examine the practice of collecting Lepidoptera in order to better govern our own activities.

Our guidelines are based on these **premises**:

Lepidoptera make up one of the largest orders of insects and therefore are an important component of biological diversity.

Lepidoptera are conspicuous in their beauty and diversity, are well known scientifically, typically adapted to specific hostplants and plant communities, and thus frequently used as indicator groups in conservation programs.

The collection of Lepidoptera has value both as a personal educational activity as well as to society. Collecting is a means of introducing both children and adults to the natural world. Collecting plays an essential role in scientific studies, in theoretical biology as well as in conservation, protection of the environment and its resources, human health, and the world food supply.

Given the typically high reproductive and dispersal potential of Lepidoptera, responsible collecting is an educational activity that normally is not detrimental to the organism nor to the environment. In certain circumstances a population(s) of Lepidoptera may be vulnerable to over-collecting; for example, populations on small islands, populations greatly reduced in size due to habitat destruction, and those specifically adapted to unusual habitats (bogs, alpine zones, etc.). The collector should seek advice from appropriate regional experts and organizations and follow all local, state (or provincial), and federal guidelines for collecting.

Guidelines

Purpose of Collecting: Collecting is a valid activity that serves several primary goals:

1. As an educational activity to instruct and inspire students or the general public in an appreciation for the natural world.

2. To create a reference collection for study and appreciation, both as a private activity and within an institution.

3. To document regional diversity, frequency and abundance of species, and as voucher material for published records.

4. To document faunal representation in environments undergoing or threatened with alteration by humans or natural forces.

5. To participate in development of regional checklists and institutional reference collections.

6. To complement a planned research endeavor. Specimen collections with associated data are resources for scientific research including ecological, evolutionary and conservation studies. Specimens are the fundamental units for comparative study in all biological disciplines, vouchering morphological, behavioral, and molecular data.

7. To aid in dissemination of educational information.

8. To augment understanding of taxonomic and ecological relationships using characters not available in photographs, e.g., genitalia, molecular data.

9. To establish cultures for scientific and educational purposes.

Collecting Methods:

Collecting adults or immature stages should be limited to sampling, not depleting, the population concerned. Numbers collected should be consistent with the purposes outlined above. Where the extent and/or fragility of the population is unknown, caution and restraint should be exercised, particularly with regard to collecting females.

Data Sharing:

All data should be recorded, preserved in digital backup media as indicated, and made available to appropriate interested parties. We encourage all collectors to publish new or otherwise valuable observations or records in an appropriate print medium or on-line database, rather than just on a social media site. Both the Journal of the Lepidopterists' Society and the News of the Lepidopterists' Society (with its annual Season Summary), are excellent outlets for these data. Data from the Season Summary are permanently archived in an online database.

Live Material:

Rearing to elucidate life histories and to obtain series of immature stages and adults is encouraged, provided that collection of the rearing stock is in keeping with these guidelines.

Reared material in excess of need should be released only in the region of origin, and in suitable habitat.

Environmental Concerns:

Protection of the supporting habitat must be recognized as the critically essential means to protect a species.

Collecting should be performed in a manner such as to minimize trampling or other damage to the habitat or to specific hostplants.

Property rights and sensibilities of others must be respected.

Collecting must comply with regulations relating to publically controlled areas, to individual species, and to habitats.

Responsibility for collected Material:

All material should be preserved with all known data attached, and protected from physical damage and deterioration (e.g. due to light, molds, and museum pests).

Collections should be made available for examination by qualified researchers.

Collections or specimens, and their associated written or photographic records, should be willed or offered to the care of an appropriate scientific institution if the collector lacks space or loses interest, or in anticipation of death. It is a good idea to deposit duplicate specimens, if available, in several institutional collections as insurance in case of fire, floods, and other disasters.

Type specimens are name-bearing types, especially holotypes and lectotypes (a designated specimen in cases when the original author did not do so). Type specimens determine the use and application of names (nomenclature, including synonymy, homonymy, priority, availability, and validity of names). Type specimens must be deposited in appropriate scientific institutions.

Related Activities of Collectors:

All known data should be recorded with the specimen, including date, location (GPS coordinates with altitude if possible), collector, habitat, larval host plant or other plant associations, parentage of immatures, etc. Recording observations of behavior and biological interactions should be regarded as important as collecting specimens. Photographic records with full data are valuable and should accompany specimens.

Collecting should include permanently recorded field notes regarding habitat, conditions, and other pertinent information.

Education of the public regarding collecting and conservation, as reciprocally beneficial activities, should be undertaken whenever possible.

Traffic in Lepidopteran Specimens:

Collection of specimens for exchange or sale should be done only in accordance with these guidelines.

Reared stock of specimens for exchange or sale should be from stock obtained in a manner consistent with these guidelines, and so documented.

Mass collecting of Lepidoptera for commercial purposes and collection of specimens for creation of saleable artifacts are not included in the purposes of the Society and are discouraged.

Legal Considerations:

Collectors should comply with local, state or provincial, federal or national, and international laws and regulations that govern collecting and possession, commerce and exchange, import and export, and protection of species. Collections should comply with additional local, state or provincial, federal or national, and international laws and regulations governing live material.

[Submitted by **M. Collins, A. Aiello, and B. Scholtens**; modified and approved by Executive Council July 2019; Davis, CA]

The High Country Lepidopterists

The High Country Lepidopterists (HCL) just had their 30th annual one day Meeting at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science (DMNS). The High Country Lepidopterists' group has no officers, no dues, and meets once a year in fall in a rotation with five institutions (DMNS, University of Denver, University of Colorado at Boulder, Colorado State University, and the Butterfly Pavilion) to promote the study of Lepidoptera. Lepidopterists from the surrounding states, lay people as well as university professors, can exchange ideas, share information and their research efforts. HCL also provides a great opportunity for students to share their research projects. This year we even had a talk on Lepidoptera of Thailand with amazing images. We just need an email address to add anybody interested in joining HCL to receive the annual meeting invitation (Sarah Triplett: striplett@butterflies.org).

The next meeting will be in fall 2020 at the University of Denver. (See group photo, Back Cover).

