

A new *Zygaena* (Lepidoptera) discovered in Iran

by

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In company of my friend Aaldert VAN ESSEN I made a collecting trip to Iran in 1971. We visited the North-East prov. of Khorasan, and finally reached the vicinity of the remnants of the lost city of Tus, famous for its flowers and gardens in older times.

This territory has troubled times behind it. The original population consisted of Aryan tribes and it is here that between the 8th and 10th century the present Persian language arose which is spoken nowadays in the whole of Iran, and in parts of Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. Between 650 and 710 Iran was usurped by Arabic Moslems, but Khorasan offered vigorous resistance. The famous caliph of Bagdad, HAROUN-AL-RASJID stamped out a revolt in 809. Falling ill, he retreated to Tus in the vain hope of recovery; he was buried in a (now destroyed) Mausoleum. After much disasters, the final blow came in 1380, when all inhabitants were beheaded by the army of TAMBERLAND.

Today the region is almost uninhabited, except by some farmers and keepers of the tomb of the poet FIRDAUSI and the mosque of HAROUN-AL-RASJID, which are yearly visited by many pilgrims, mostly arriving by bus. Nowadays a four-lane asphalt road is found here.

It is in this remote spot that I discovered a *Zygaena* which as far as I can ascertain is new to science. The resting burnet shows a remarkably strong resemblance to the flowers of *Alhagi persarum* Boise & Buhs (a very thorny shrub which reaches about 90 cm, belonging to the family Papilionaceae and kindly identified by Mr. F. ADEMA, Rijksherbarium, Leiden), which appears to be the food plant of the caterpillar. I describe the species as

Zygaena essenii n. sp.

Description. Antennae black; legs yellow; collar red; tegulae creamy yellow; fore head red, but yellow between the antennae; thorax black; abdomen completely red with small black extremity. Wing span 24-30 mm.

Forewings: ground colour black; spots 1 and 2 confluent, red, with creamy yellow outer margin; spots 3 and 4 confluent, creamy yellow, with small red dot in spot 3 and faint traces of red in spot 4; spots 5 and 6 also confluent, red, and surrounded by creamy yellow.

Hindwings: red, not transparent; outer border black, narrow, tapering in the direction of the anal angle, but widening just below vein 2 and then gradually disappearing.

Fringes of fore and hindwings black.

Holotype ♂, Iran, Khorasan, Tus, 1000 m, 13-17.VI.1971; allotype ♀, same locality and date; 60 paratypes.

Holotype and allotype in the collection of the author; paratypes in the same

collection, moreover some in the collection of the Institute of Taxonomic Zoology (Zoölogisch Museum), Amsterdam, and in the collections of some friends.

D i s c u s s i o n. *Zygaena essenii* resembles more or less *Z. truchmena* Eversmann and *Z. chirazica* Reiss, but in these species the creamy white colour of the spots is replaced by white. It has also some resemblance with *Z. brandti* Reiss and *Z. saadii* Reiss, but these have a spot in the middle of the outer border of the hindwings and their abdomen is not nearly completely red. Moreover all these species have in the hindwings an oblique band of different length, devoid of scales and starting at the base. This band lacks in *Z. essenii*. The differences in the colour of forehead, tegulae and thorax are apparent from the description.



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Zygaena essenii n. sp., ♂ holotype (below), ♀ allotype (above); $\times 1\frac{1}{2}$.

The living caterpillar is of a dull greenish colour (as in that of *Zygaena viciae* Den. & Schiff.), with a light middorsal line and a yellow supra-stigmatic line on the sides; the anterior half of each segment bears on each side two more or less quadrangular or rounded black dots. My friend, Prof. Dr. A. DE WILDE will describe the caterpillar in more details after preserved specimens, in due time.

I thank Mr. J. HUISENGA for the excellent photograph which he kindly prepared for this paper.

Groningen, Westerbinnensingel 3.

De eerste waarneming van *Leucodonta bicoloria* Den. & Schiff. in Nederland. Blijkens een inlegblaadje in een exemplaar van „Onze Vlinders” van D. TER HAAR, eerste druk, is deze vlinder al eerder waargenomen dan bekend was. De Catalogus-LEMPKE (1959) vermeldt (p. 350): „Het is op het ogenblik nauwelijks te geloven, dat het eerste Nederlandse exemplaar pas in 1903 bij Roermond gevangen werd”.

Het Addendum van TER HAAR luidt: „Op blz. 105 komt voor *Notodonta Bicoloria*, W.V. Deze soort is den 24 Juni 1900 te Velp bij Arnhem door een leerling van het gymnasium, E. Beerents, boven een braamstruik vliegende gevangen”.

Zoals bekend vond ZÖLLNER in 1906 een rups op dezelfde vindplaats, Velp.

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