

# SEARCHING FOR "SOSOMUCO" AND THE "RIO NEGRO"

Any student of South American dragonflies may have considerable trouble to trace a locality in Colombia mentioned by F. RIS (1918, *Arch. Naturg.* (A) 9: 1-197) as "Sosomuco" [sic!]. The same name appears also in the lepidopterological literature as, for example, in H. NEUSTETER (1929, *Lepidopterorum Catalogus*, pars 36, W.-Junk, Berlin), and as "Susumuco" [sic!] in B. D'ABRERA (Butterflies of the neotropical region, Part II, Hill House, Victoria, Australia). — Probably all these citations refer to material caught by the known German collector A.H. FASSL. He himself (FASSL, 1915, *Ent. Rdsch.* 32; cited by Ris, 1918 (cf. above, p. 3) explains that the traveller reaches "Sosomuco" in about two days after passing over the eastern Cordillera near Bogotá, at an elevation of 3200 m. "Sosomuco" itself is situated at about 1000 m, and 200 m above the "Rio Negro", a torrential mountain river.

For several years I was searching in vain for "Sosomuco" on the maps of Colombia. I began to suspect an orthographic error and was inclined to take Sogamoso (Dept of Boyacá) as the true locality. This town lies, however, at 2570 m above sea level, and is too far from Bogotá to be reached within two days (in Fassel's times). Similarly, Somondoco, a village situated south east of Chocontá (Boyacá) at 1670 m, seemed still too high. — Then, recently, and thanks to the kind help of Ing. F. Cerdá, of our Institute, I had the opportunity to study a splendid map of Venezuela, which includes a part of the Colombian eastern Cordillera (Aero Service Corp., Philadelphia, PA, U.S.A., revised ed., 1964, 1:1,250,000). To my satisfaction, I at last discovered the site: Quebrada Susumoco [sic!]. A village is not indicated, but in Fassel's times a custome-house was there, which served to him as a starting point for his collecting. No doubt, still nowadays a "retén" (check point) of the police may be established at this place, which is situated close to the boundary line between the Departments of Cundinamarca and Meta, on the road from

Bogotá to Villavicencio, at an elevation between 860 and 1000 m. In fact, a river called Rio Negro passes below, as mentioned by Fassel.

The locality label "Rio Negro" is also worthy of some comments. As a matter of fact, there are quite a few "Rio Negro's" in Latin America. By far the best known — if not the only known — is the big one between the Venezuelan southern border and the city of Manáus, on the Amazon. This river has, however, no particular spring; its origin is simply the junction of the Rio Guainía with the Casiquiare. If a dragonfly has been taken on the "upper Rio Negro", this means that the place of capture lies still below 100 m above sea level. It appears, therefore, exceedingly unlikely that certain dragonflies with a supposed Andean distribution should have been collected on this Rio Negro. RIS (1918, cf. above) mentions many species from a "Rio Negro", which is indeed the one below Susumoco, east of Bogotá (cf. above). SELYS (1873, *Bull. Acad. Belg.* 35: 469-519; and probably in other papers) also mentions a "Rio Negro", without, however, specifying which one he had in mind. Most strikingly, he consistently omits to add "Brazil", suspecting perhaps, that the "Rio Negro" in question was different from the famous one, which joins the Amazon at Manáus. He localizes his "Rio Negro" in very general terms, viz.: "Rio Negro et Rio Grande, bassin supérieur de l'Amazon", in the case of "*Thore*" *gigantea* race *procera* (p. 498), or: "Rio Negro, Amérique équatoriale", in the case of *Euthore plagiata* (p. 501).

The type series of the first species was caught by Lindig at "Bogotá" (SELYS, 1869, *Bull. Acad. Belg.* 27: 645-680), while "Rio Negro" is the type locality of *E. plagiata*, and the place of capture of further specimens of "*Thore*" *procera*. I would not wonder if both species had been collected on the very same Rio Negro mentioned by Fassel in Ris, even when this Rio Negro flows later into the Meta, which eventually reaches the Orinoco, not the Amazon. Selys may not have been familiar with the local river systems, erroneously attributing this Rio Negro to the "bassin supérieur de l'Amazon".

My emphasis on the Colombian Rio Negro (Fassel's) finds its explanation in the fact that this river borders the road from Bogotá to Villavicencio, which was and is by far the most

important connection of Bogotá with the eastern llanos (plains), and therefore, most easily accessible to collectors who stay in Bogotá. — I do not know whether in the eastern slopes of the Ecuadorian Andes other rivers exist called "Rio Negro", one of which could be the Rio Negro mentioned by Selys, but the Brazilian Rio Negro must definitely be discarded as a possible place of capture of Andean species such as the two polythorids quoted above.

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