Oskar Brattström - Nigerian butterflies

Click here to email the author

Version 1.0

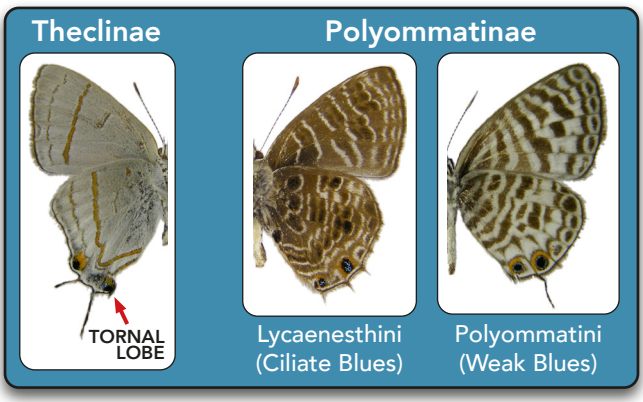
CILIATE BLUES

Family Lycaenidae
Subfamily Polyommatinae
Tribe Lycaenesthini

Red-spot Ciliate Blue
(Anthene lunulata grosei)

Identification of subfamilies and tribes

The subfamily **Polyommatinae** can be separated from the somewhat similar subfamily **Theclinae** by looking at the tornal end of the hindwing. In **Theclinae** there is always a more or less pronunced tornal lobe (see red arrow on image below to the left), while the hindwing tornus is more evenly rounded in **Polyommatinae**. **Theclinae** species are usually tailed, sometimes with tails as long as the hindwing, but they can also be complely tailless.



Within **Polyommatinae** there are two related groups: the **Ciliate Blues (Tribe Lycaenesthini)** and the **Weak Blues (Tribe Polyommatini)**. They can generally be told apart by looking at the small hindwing tails. In the **Ciliate Blues** there are usually three short tails on the hindwing, formed by elongated hairs at the wing edge. **Weak Blues** are often completely tailless, or have either one or two tails per wing. When they have tails, these are usally longer than those found in the **Ciliate Blues**.

CILIATE BLUES

Family Lycaenidae
Subfamily Polyommatinae
Tribe Lycaenesthini

Ciliate Blues (Tribe Lycaenesthini) are typically small butterflies, and about 55 species are known to occur in Nigeria. The taxonomy of the African members of the tribe was thoroughly revised in 2010 by Michel Libert, who resolved a lot of confusing problems and redefined the borders between genera. This means that Torben Larsen's West Africa reference book, published in 2005, needs to be used with caution when trying to identify any specimens of Lycaenesthini. This guide includeds newly designed identification keys, specifically aimed for Nigerian species. However, these keys have not yet been field-tested so many alternations are likely to be made in the near future. The species-groups used in these keys are organised solely on shared morphological similarities and does not neceserily imply any relatedness!

Click here to submit your comments

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Nadia Van Gordon who proofread many text sections, Jon Baker who read through the final draft and provided many valuable comments, all the photographers who provided the photos, without whom a project such as this would be almost impossible, all the early field testers who helped me work out technical issues, Steve Collins and the African Butterfly Research Institute (ABRI) for all the support over the years, A.P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute (APLORI) for their incredible work to promote biodiversity in Nigeria, the Nigerian Bird Atlas Project for leading the way on Nigerian Citizen Science, and Ulf Ottosson for his constant enthusiasm and dedication to conservation.

This project is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Torben B. Larsen. Without his early support I would probably never have begun my work with Nigerian butterflies.

REGINE HAKENBECK

PHOTOGRAPHERS

All photos are used with the permission of the photographers, or have been published online under a Creative Commons license allowing reuse for non-commercial purposes. Images from the following photographers are used in this chapter: Adedotun Ajibade, Nick Baker, Nik Borrow, Rouxne Botha, Oskar Brattström, Peter Bygate, Andre Coetzer, Thomas Desloges, KD Dijkstra, Regine Hakenbeck, Emily Halsey, Allen Holmes, Adrian Hoskins, Ian Lawson, Matt Muir, Karen Nichols, Colin Ralston, Szabolcs Sáfián, Charles J. Sharp, Atilla Steiner, John Vallender, Lmike vnr@treknature, Rainer Wendt, Mark Williams, Steve Woodhall, Bart Wursten, Hannes Öhm. A special thanks to Michel Libert who allowed me to resue several of his specimen photographs previously included in his detailed 2010 revision of all the genera included in this chapter. Photographs used in the identification keys will only have the photographers name listed if the image is not used elsewhere in the chapter. A single name listed next to multiple images of the same species indicates that all photos were taken by that photographer.

CILIATE BLUES

Family Lycaenidae
Subfamily Polyommatinae
Tribe Lycaenesthini

Rounded hindwing without tornal lobe, three small hindwing tails.

INCLUDED GENERA
(CLICKABLE LINKS)

Cupidesthes

Triclema

Neurellipes

Monile

Anthene

OSKAR BRATTSTRÖM

CILIATE BLUES (LYCAENESTHINI – POLYOMMATINAE)

There are five genera of **Ciliate Blues** in Africa, and all of them have representatives in Nigeria. The taxonomy has been heavily revised since Larsen's (2005) West Africa reference book was published.

Genus *Anthene*

THOMAS DESLOGES

Anthene definita

Anthene is quite a variable genus. The ventral markings are normally formed from pairs of short light streaks, sometimes merging into short bands. The bands are always shorter than those of ***Monile*** , ***Neurellipes*** and ***Triclema***. Besides the usual two tornal spots, they can also have additional dark round spots on the hindwings (similar to many Polyommatini).

THOMAS DESLOGES

Anthene lunulata

THOMAS DESLOGES

Anthene larydas

Genus *Cupidesthes*

THOMAS DESLOGES

Cupidesthes gabunica

All species of ***Cupidesthes*** tend to be rare. The ventral surface of some species look similar to light species of ***Anthene***. Compared to ***Anthene*** they are weaker fliers, and all species are tied to wet forest habitats.

CILIATE BLUES (LYCAENESTHINI – POLYOMMATINAE)

Genus *Neurellipes*

THOMAS DESLOGES

Neurellipes kampala

The ventral markings of most ***Neurellipes*** are formed by longer and neater light streaks, often with a higher contrast than in ***Anthene***. Sometimes the white streaks are so broad that they merge into white patches. Most species are smaller than typical ***Anthene***,and the dorsal surfaces often have orange-red patches. The genus is normally found in rainforests.

Genus *Triclema*

THOMAS DESLOGES

Triclema lacides

The ventral markings of ***Triclema*** are similar to ***Neurellipes***. They normally lack orange dorsal patches, but there are exceptions. Most species are very small compared to related genera, but there is some size overlap. The genus is found in both forests and savannah habitats.

Genus *Monile*

OSKAR BRATTSTRÖM

Monile gemmifera

This small genera is formed by two tiny species, and one is found in West Africa. It can be told apart from all the other West African **Lycaenesthini** by the neat row of four to five prominent verntral tornal spots.

Identification key for *Anthene*

The most effective way to identify *Anthene* species is generally to begin looking at the ventral pattern. This will help to narrow the number of potential species down to a more manageable level. Males and females can sometimes have different colours and wing shapes, but this key is designed to work regardless of such variation.

Clicking on the black boxes below will take you straight to the first species within each group

STEP 1

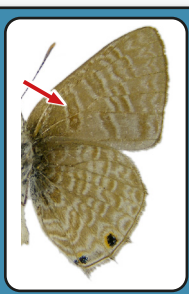
There are no basal markings on either of the wings.

→ *Anthene* **GROUP 2**
A. rubricinctus

There are basal markings on the hindwing (forewing pattern can be variable).

→ **GO TO STEP 2**

STEP 2



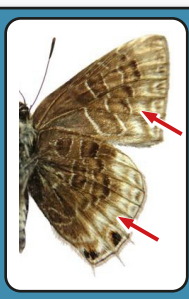
There are basal markings at the base of the forewing.

→ *Anthene* **GROUP 1**
A. crawshayi
A. larydas

There are no basal markings on the forewing.

→ **GO TO STEP 3**

STEP 3



The submarginal part of both wings is much lighter than other areas.

→ *Anthene* **GROUP 4**
A. akoae

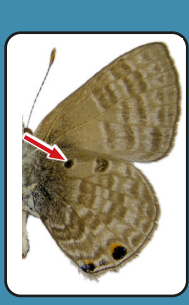
The base colour of the wings is quite even across all ventral surfaces.

→ **GO TO STEP 4**

STEP 4

There are no clearly darkened round spots on the hindwing except for the tornal spots.

→ *Anthene* **GROUP 3**
A. afra
A. agumatsa
A. definita
A. ligures



There are more darkened spots on the hindwing, besides the tornal spots.

→ *Anthene* **GROUP 5**
A. amarah
A. confusa
A. dulcis
A. imuru
A. levis
A. liodes
A. lunulata
A. princeps
A. starki
A. sylvanus

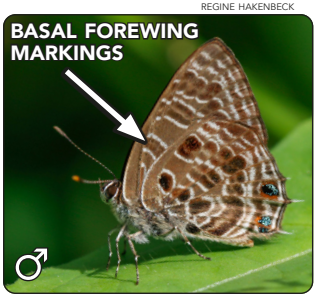
CILIATE BLUES (LYCAENESTHINI – POLYOMMATINAE)

Anthene larydas (Cramer, 1780)
Common Ciliate Blue

Anthene GROUP 1

This is a common forest butterfly that also can extend far out into Guinea Savannah, as long as some dense vegetation is present. In Nigeria it has been found as far north as Kaduna. Together with **Crawshay's Ciliate Blue** *(A. crawshayi)*, this is the only Nigerian ***Anthene*** species that has clear markings in the ventral forewing cell. The ventral pattern is quite dark and can look similar to the genera ***Monile***, ***Neurellipes*** and ***Triclema***, but these are all considerably smaller species. The male has a deep indigo colouration on the dorsal side (similar to males of many other ***Anthene*** species). The female instead has a dark greyish ground-colour with faint white or light-blue markings, somehwat similar to the **Common Indigo Ciliate Blue** *(Anthene sylvanus)*.

REGINE HAKENBECK



RAINER WENDT

ADRIAN HOSKINS

CILIATE BLUES (LYCAENESTHINI – POLYOMMATINAE)

Anthene crawshayi vuattouxi Libert, 2010
Crawshay's Ciliate Blue

Anthene GROUP 1

Together with the **Common Ciliate Blue** *(A. larydas)*, this is the only Nigerian ***Anthene*** species that has clear markings in the ventral forewing cell. The two species can easily be separated as **Crawshaw's Ciliate Blue** *(A. crawshayi)* has a different dorsal colouration in both sexes, and is also more tied to savannah habitats. The male has a much lighter violet dorsal ground-colour combined with a lighter ventral pattern. The female usually has a fair amount of light blue scaling. Females of two other species, the **Light Ciliate Blue** *(A. liodes)* and the **Black-edged Ciliate Blue** (A. afra), have similar dorsal patterns. However, they both have different ventral patterns and also lack any basal markings in the forewing cell.

THOMAS DESLOGES

ANDRE COETZER

ANDRE COETZER

CILIATE BLUES (LYCAENESTHINI – POLYOMMATINAE)

Anthene rubricinctus rubricinctus (Holland, 1891)
Anthene rubricinctus derubescens Libert, 2010
Indigo Ciliate Blue

Anthene GROUP 2

This is the only of the West African ***Anthene*** species that lacks basal markings on the ventral hindwing, making it quite easy to identify in the field. The dorsal side of the male is uniformly deep indigo-violet, similar to some of the other species. The species is found in forests all over southern Nigeria, but while males can be quite common, females are only rarely seen. The nominate subspecies ***rubricinctus*** is only found south east of the Cross River. Over the rest of the Nigerian forest zone, the species is represented by the western subspecies ***derubescens***. Males of both subpseices are similar, but females of the nominate ***rubricinctus*** have a narrow orange-red patch on the dorsal hindwing (the only West African ***Anthene*** with a red patch) while ***derubescens*** females only have a tiny red crown around the tornal spots.

MARK WILLIAMS

rubricinctus rubricinctus

MICHEL LIBERT

rubricinctus derubescens

ADRIAN HOSKINS

CILIATE BLUES (LYCAENESTHINI – POLYOMMATINAE)

Anthene ligures ligures (Hewitson, 1874)
Lesser Indigo Ciliate Blue

Anthene GROUP 3

The male of this forest species has a warm cinnamon brown colour on the ventral surface, somewhat similar to the **Indigo Ciliate Blue** *(A. rubricinctus)*, but it also has clear markings in the basal area of the hindwing. The female has more rounded wings, and the ventral side is light, sometimes almost white, but otherwise the markings are similar to those of the male. The dorsal side of the male is uniformly deep indigo-violet, similar to many other species. The female is instead greyish-brown, with just a hint of lighter markings at the submarginal parts of the hindwing. In Nigeria the species is quite rare, and only found east of the Niger River. There are old records from western Nigeria and Ghana, but most likely all of these refer to the recently described ***Anthene agumatsa*** that co-occurs with *A. ligures* in eastern Nigeria, but then extends westwards as far as eastern Guinea-Conakry.

MARK WILLIAMS

THOMAS DESLOGES

CHARLES J SHARP

CILIATE BLUES (LYCAENESTHINI – POLYOMMATINAE)

Anthene agumatsa nigeriensis Libert, 2010

Anthene GROUP 3

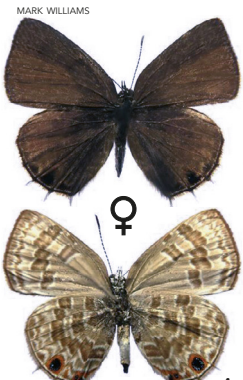
This forest butterfly is similar to the **Lesser Indigo Ciliate Blue** *(A. ligures)*, in fact so similar that they used to be considered as the same species up until 2010. The males can usually be told apart by the less warm brown ventral colour in ***A. agumatsa***, while the female ventral colour is generally darker than ***A. ligures*** and with a stronger contrast between the ground colour and the streak-like markings. The dorsal colours are similar in both species. ***A. agumatsa*** is found all over southern Nigeria, but is usually rare. It co-occurs with ***A. ligures*** east of the Niger River.

JOHN VALLENDER

CHARLES J SHARP

Anthene ligures

MARK WILLIAMS



KAREN NICHOLS

Anthene agumatsa

CILIATE BLUES (LYCAENESTHINI – POLYOMMATINAE)

Anthene definita definita (Butler, 1899)
Defined Ciliate Blue

Anthene GROUP 3

This species is widespread and occurs throughout most of East Africa, and here it is generally common. It is much rarer in West Africa, and only just reaches as far west as Nigeria where it has been recorded from a few sites along the Cameroonian border as well as on the Jos Plateau. It is primarily a savannah species, but one with good capacity to colonise open areas in the forest zone. The female has a unique and easy to recognise pattern of black spots on the dorsal side, which is completely missing in the uniformly lilac-blue male. Compared to species with similar ventral patterns, the dorsal colour of the male is much lighter, making correct field identification quite easy.

ANDRE COETZER

COLIN RALSTON

ANDRE COETZER

CILIATE BLUES (LYCAENESTHINI – POLYOMMATINAE)

Anthene afra afra (Bethune-Baker, 1910)
Black-edged Ciliate Blue

Anthene GROUP 3

In Nigeria, this species have been found a few times in the eastern rainforest zone. The male has a distinct broad black border on all wings on the dorsal side. The dorsal pattern of the female is similar to that of **Crawshay's Ciliate Blue** *(A. crawshayi)*, but the ventral patterns of the two species is quite different.

MARK WILLIAMS

Anthene akoae akoae Libert, 2010

Anthene GROUP 4

In Nigeria, this species have only been found once in Oban Hills. Both sexes have a unique light and broad submarginal band on the ventral side. The specimens in the photos belong to the similar slightly lighter eastern subspecies *A. akoae albidior*.

MARK WILLIAMS

CILIATE BLUES (LYCAENESTHINI – POLYOMMATINAE)

Anthene sylvanus sylvanus (Drury, 1773)
Common Indigo Ciliate Blue

Anthene GROUP 5

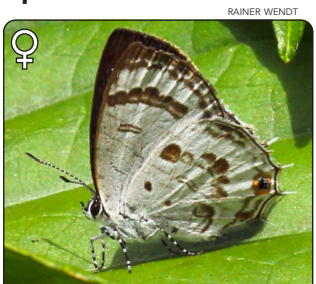
This is a distinctive and common forest species that extends into dense Guinea Savannah and also tolerates a high degree of habitat disturbance. The dorsal surface of the male is similar to many of the other Anthene species with dark indigo blue males, for example the **Common Ciliate Blue** *(Anthene larydas)*. Compared to most similar species, the ventral markings are much more contrasting against the ground colour, especially in the female. The female dorsal surface is quite variable and sometimes has a quite prominent blue coloration on the forewings. The extreme contrast on the ventral surface usually helps to identifiy most specimens, but confusion with the **Light Ciliate Blue** *(Anthene liodes)* is possible in worn female specimens.

THOMAS DESLOGES

♀

REGINE HAKENBACK

RAINER WENDT



Anthene liodes monteironis (Kirby, 1878)
Light Ciliate Blue

Anthene GROUP 5

This is quite an uncommon butterfly, usually found in transition habitats between forests and savannah. The dorsal surface of the male has a strong violet sheen similar to many other ***Anthene*** species such as the **Common Ciliate Blue** *(A. larydas)*, but there is a thin black margin on all wings. The female usually has a fair amount of blue dorsal markings, but the costas of both wings are always broadly black. Both sexes have a light ventral ground colour with dark hindwing spots, similar to some other ***Anthene*** species such as the **Common Indigo Ciliate Blue** *(A. sylvanus)*, but compared to this species the contrast between the dark and light markings is less pronounced so that the typical ***Anthene*** ventral streak-like patterns are only weakly defined.

THOMAS DESLOGES

♀

REGINE HAKENBECK

ALLEN HOLMES

CILIATE BLUES (LYCAENESTHINI – POLYOMMATINAE)

Anthene princeps (Butler, 1876)
Coppery Ciliate Blue

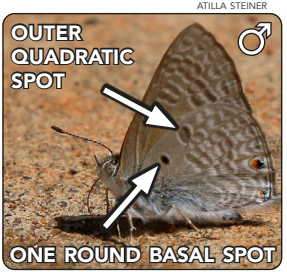
Anthene GROUP 5

This savannah species can push quite far into drier and degraded forests, but is quite rare in West Africa. It has a single basal spot on the ventral hindwing together with a quadratic spot further out along the costa. The male dorsal surface has a distinct coppery tone, while the female has a varied amount of blue scaling.

STEVE WOODHALL

THOMAS DESLOGES

ATILLA STEINER



Anthene starki Larsen, 2005
Western Black-spot Ciliate Blue

Anthene GROUP 5

This species is similar to ***A. princeps***, but lacks the quadratic spot on the ventral hindwing. The male also has more blue dorsal colour. In Nigeria, it is only known from the Kaduna area, but likely to be found in other northern areas.

MARK WILLIAMS

SZABOLCS SÁFIÁN

CILIATE BLUES (LYCAENESTHINI – POLYOMMATINAE)

Anthene lunulata grosei (Aurivillius, 1898)
Red-spot Ciliate Blue

Anthene GROUP 5

The ventral surface of the Red-spot Ciliate Blue is somewhat intermediate between the **Coppery Ciliate Blue** *(Anthene princeps)* and the **Leaden Ciliate Blue** *(Anthene amarah)*. There are three well developed round spots on the hindwing, often dark red rather than black. The male has a light violet-blue dorsal coloration with broad dark margins along the outer edges of the forewings (not seen at all angles). The female has some blue scaling on the hindwing, but the forewing is generally dark grey to black. Both sexes have a prominent red crown over the tornal spot, but it is usually larger in the female. It is a very comon species in most types of African savannah habitats.

THOMAS DESLOGES

COLIN RALSTON

OSKAR BRATTSTRÖM

CILIATE BLUES (LYCAENESTHINI – POLYOMMATINAE)

Anthene amarah amarah (Guérin-Méneville, 1847)
Leaden Ciliate Blue

Anthene GROUP 5

This species is easy to identify by the black bar at the base of the ventral forewing that is present in both sexes. This marking is almost always visible when the butterfly is sitting with closed wings, something they generally do for a few seconds upon landing, before slowly opening their wings. There are also more dark ventral spots than in other *Anthene*. The male dorsal surface has a light, glossy lead-like tone, while the female has a brown non-glossy tone. The red crown of the tornal spot on the hindwing is better developed in the female. It is a widespread and common species found across Africa in most drier types of savannah.

OSKAR BRATTSTRÖM

ROUXNE BOTHA

RAINER WENDT

CILIATE BLUES (LYCAENESTHINI – POLYOMMATINAE)

Anthene irumu (Stempffer, 1948)
Irumu Ciliate Blue

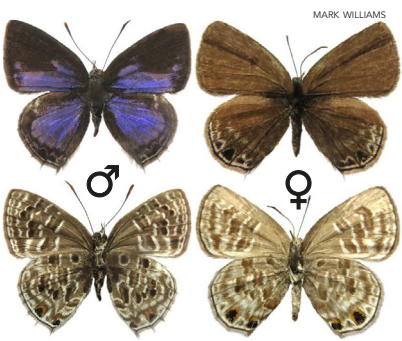
Anthene GROUP 5

Anthene levis (Hewitson, 1878)
Levis Ciliate Blue

Anthene GROUP 5

These two species are somewhat similar to the **Confusing Ciliate Blue** *(A. confusa)* and the **Mashuna Ciliate Blue** *(A. dulcis)*. However, those two species are found in dry savannah habitats, while the species on this page are found in transitional habitats between forest and dense savannah across southern Nigeria. Compared to ***Anthene irumu***, the male of the slightly smaller ***Anthene levis*** has a deeper violet shine on the forewing that also extends into the cell. The ventral pattern is darker in both sexes of ***Anthene levis***. Both species are smaller than other forest ***Anthene***.

Anthene irumu



Anthene levis

Anthene confusa Libert, 2010
Confusing Ciliate Blue

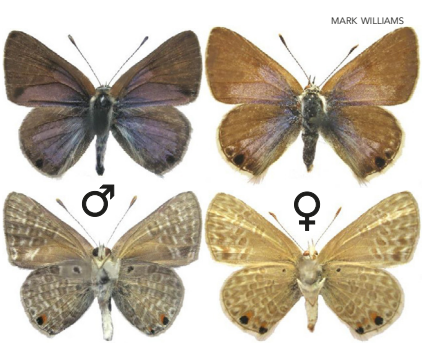
Anthene GROUP 5

This is a small species adapted to the driest of savannah habitats. In Nigeria it has only been found in the Kano area. It is probably more widespread, but due to its diminutive size, it is likely to have been overlooked in the past.

Anthene dulcis xerophila Libert, 2010
Mashuna Ciliate Blue

Anthene GROUP 5

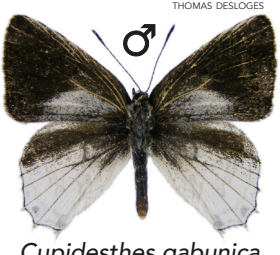
This is a another small dry-adapted species that in Nigeria only has been found in the Katsina area. It is quite similar to the preceeding species, but both sexes generally have smaller blue patches and also fewer ventral dark basal spots. Like the previous species, it is likely to be more widespread.



Genus *Cupidesthes* – Hairtails

The **Hairtails** are represented by five species in Nigeria. They are all rare and often hard to identify to species level. The males are usually dark blue on the dorsal side with broad black costal areas, except in the species *C. gabunica* that has a much lighter dorsal coloration. The most common species *(C. lithas)* is shown below. The females are normally black and white, and the ventral surface is usually quite light in both sexes. All species are linked to forests, and tend to be weaker fliers than other **Lycaenesthini**. Since they are so rare and little collected material exists, we are still not sure if some males and females belong to the same species or not.

THOMAS DESLOGES

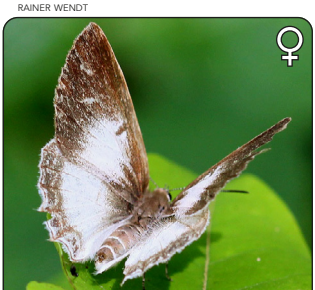


Cupidesthes gabunica

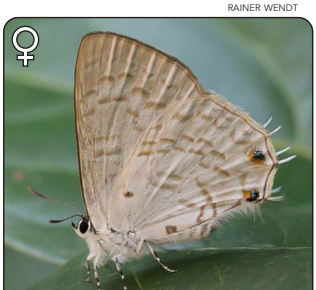
MARK WILLIAMS

Cupidesthes lithas

RAINER WENDT



RAINER WENDT



Cupidesthes lithas

Identification key for *Neurellipes*

This key is uses the dorsal wing patterns of the Nigerian ***Neurellipes*** species to narrow options down to species-group level. The key is designed to work for both sexes, but some females lack prominent patterns and can be hard to 'key out'. Details should always be cross-checked in the individual species pages instead of relying soley on the key for identifications!

Clicking on the black boxes below will take you straight to the first page for each species-group

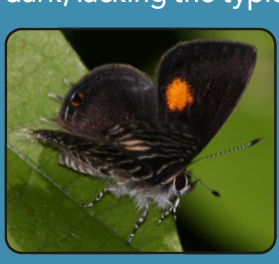
STEP 1

The dorsal **forewing** pattern of both sexes has a blotched appearance without any well delimited patches. The pattern is formed by slightly lighter elements than the ground colour. In darker species this can be almost impossible to detect in worn specimens.

→ *Neurellipes* **GROUP 4**

N. boormani
N. flavomaculatus
N. lamprocles
N. lyzanius

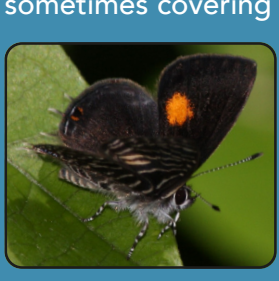
The dorsal **forewing** of both sexes have quite well defined patches in orange, blue or yellow. Females of a few species lack any patches, but in these species the forewings are evenly dark, lacking the typical blotching of Group 4.



→ **GO TO STEP 2**

STEP 2

All patches on the dorsal surface are red or orange, they can be very small but sometimes covering almost the entire wing.



→ **GO TO STEP 3**

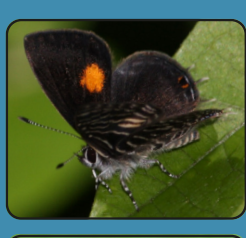
The dorsal patches (on both wings) are yellow, white or blue. Some females have no patches. One species in this group has a small orange forewing patch, but combined with a blueish hindwing patch. No species in this group have only orange patches!

→ *Neurellipes* **GROUP 3**

N. emkopoti
N. lachares
N. lyzicles
N. xanthopoecilus

STEP 3

The dorsal **forewing** of both sexes has an orange patch. There are never a well developed patch on the hindwing, but there is usually a small orange tornal crown.



→ *Neurellipes* **GROUP 1**

N. fulvimacula
N. kampala
N. larseni
N. lusones
N. lychnides

There are large orange areas on both the forewing and the hindwing of both sexes.

→ *Neurellipes* **GROUP 2**

N. erythropoecilus
N, juba
N. lychnaptes
N. makala
N. mahota
N. rhoko
N. scintillula

CILIATE BLUES (LYCAENESTHINI – POLYOMMATINAE)

Neurellipes lusones (Hewitson, 1874)
Large Red-spot Hairtail

Neurellipes **GROUP 1**

All species in ***Neurellipes* GROUP 1** have a well-defined orange-red patch on the dorsal forewing, and limited orange hindwing coloration. There is sometimes small reddish markings in the tornal area of the dorsal hindwing, especially in females. However, none of the members of ***Neurellipes* GROUP 1** have any of the large orange patches on the hindwing that are found in *Neurellipes* **GROUP 2**.

KD DIJKSTRA

OSKAR BRATTSTRÖM

The **Large Red-spot Hairtail** *(N. lusones)* is the most common species in the group and is found in forests all across southern Nigeria. It can readily be separated from all similar species as the orange forewing patch is clearly visible also on the ventral side. No other Nigerian species in ***Neurellipes* GROUP 1** has any clear orange patterns on the ventral forewing.

EMILY HALSEY

CILIATE BLUES (LYCAENESTHINI – POLYOMMATINAE)

Neurellipes fulvimacula (Mabille, 1890)
Medium Red-spot Hairtail

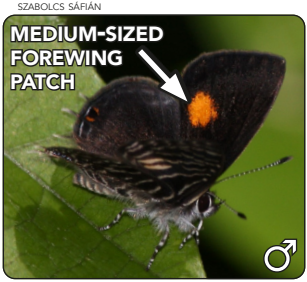
Neurellipes GROUP 1

Neurellipes kampala incerta Libert, 2010
Kampala Hairtail

Neurellipes GROUP 1

These two species are similar to the **Large Red-Patch Hairtail** *(N. lusones)*, but they both have smaller red forewing patches (and the patch is also not clearly visible on the ventral side). It is not always possible to separate them accuratedly, but ***N. fulvimacul***a have a slightly larger forewing patch, while the ventral white lines are slightly wider in ***N. kampala*** (especially in the female). The pictures below provide some more details.

SZABOLCS SÁFIÁN



NICK BAKER

Neurellipes fulvimacula

DORSAL PHOTO HAS BEEN SLIGHTLY MODIFIED TO BETTER RESEMBLE THE NIGERIAN SUBSPECIES INCERTA

THOMAS DESLOGES

Neurellipes kampala

CILIATE BLUES (LYCAENESTHINI – POLYOMMATINAE)

Neurellipes larseni Libert, 2010
Larsen's Hairtail

Neurellipes GROUP 1

Neurellipes lychnides (Hewitson, [1878])
Brown Hairtail

Neurellipes GROUP 1

These two species are very rare, and also hard to separate from the rest of ***Neurellipes* GROUP 1,** but they are both typically larger than any other similar species. The forewing spot of ***N. larseni*** is larger than that of ***N. lychnaptes***.

N. lychnaptes

N. larseni

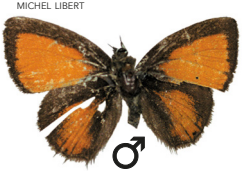
MICHEL LIBERT

Neurellipes lychnaptes lychnaptes (Holland, 1891)
Red Forewing Hairtail

Neurellipes GROUP 2

The tiny **Red Forewing Hairtail** *(N. lychnaptes)* has a large orange dorsal patch that covers most of the forewing. The hindwing patch is highly variable. There is only a single Nigerian record of the species (Oban Hills). ***N. rhoko*** is similar, but with broader dark forewing margins.

MICHEL LIBERT



NICK BAKER

CILIATE BLUES (LYCAENESTHINI – POLYOMMATINAE)

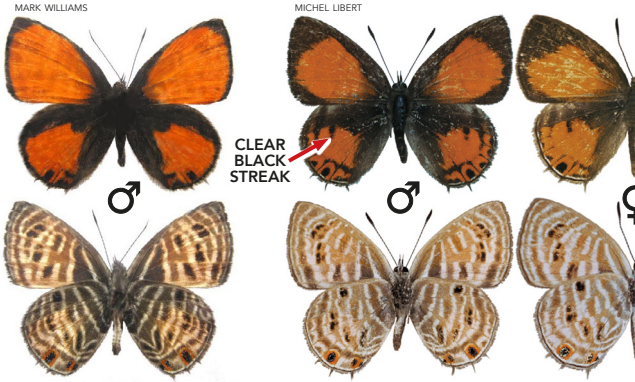
Neurellipes scintillula scintillula (Holland, 1891)
Neurellipes scintillula aurea (Bethune-Baker, 1910)
Golden Hairtail

Neurellipes GROUP 2

Neurellipes makala (Bethune-Baker, 1910)

Neurellipes GROUP 2

The **Golden Hairtail** *(N. scintillula)* is found across the Nigerian rainforest zone and is represented by the subspecies ***aurea*** west of Niger River and ***scintillula*** in the east. It has the most extensive orange patches of all Nigerian ***Neurellipes*** species. The only other species with almost as large patches is ***Neurellipes makala***, which in Nigeria only occurs in the Oban Hills area. Females of both species have less brilliant orange colours, and the ***N. scintullula*** female is almost as dark as both sexes of ***N. makala***. The two species can be told apart by looking at the dorsal hindwing pattern. In ***N. makala*** there is a clear black streak (see photos) that is missing in both sexes of ***N. scintillula***.



Neurellipes scintillula *Neurellipes makala*

CILIATE BLUES (LYCAENESTHINI – POLYOMMATINAE)

Neurellipes mahota (Grose-Smith, 1887)
Mahota Hairtail

Neurellipes GROUP 2

Neurellipes rhoko (Sáfián, 2014)

Neurellipes GROUP 2

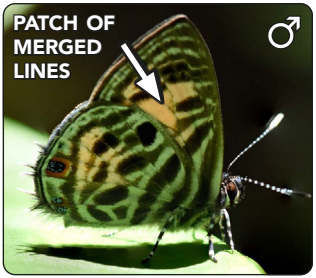
Both of these species are very similar, but the size alone should be enough to separate them from each other. The forewing of the **Mahota Hairtail** *(N. mahota)* is about 12mm in length compared to just 9mm for ***Neurellipes***. They have both been found in south-eastern Nigeria, but are very rare. There are no known female specimens of ***N. rhoko***, and for ***N. mahota*** only a few potential females have been collected, and these might even turn out to belong to another species!

SCHABOLZS SÁFIÁN

SCHABOLZS SÁFIÁN

NICK BAKER (BOTH PHOTOS BELOW)

NICK BAKER



Neurellipes mahota

Neurellipes rhoko

CILIATE BLUES (LYCAENESTHINI – POLYOMMATINAE)

Neurellipes erythropoecilus locuples Curious Hairtail (Grose-Smith, 1898)

Neurellipes GROUP 2

Neurellipes juba (Fabricius, 1787) Anomalous Hairtail

Neurellipes GROUP 2

These two species share a combination of the ventral pattern being mainly formed by enlarged light lines merging into patches togheter with large orange dorsal patrches on both wings. The ventral pattern of the **Anomolous Hairtail** *(N. juba)* is very distinct and the species cannot be mistaken for any other Nigerian butterfly. The **Curious Hairtail** *(N. erythropoecilus)* has a ventral pattern somewhat similar to ***N. xanthopoecilus***, but with a unique yellow tone making it easy to recognise in the field. The sexes are quite similar in both species.

PETER BYGATE

RAINER WENDT

Neurellipes erythropoecilus

Neurellipes juba

CILIATE BLUES (LYCAENESTHINI – POLYOMMATINAE)

Neurellipes lachares lachares (Hewitson, 1878)
Silky Hairtail

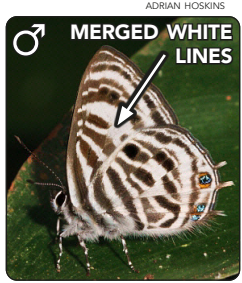
Neurellipes GROUP 3

Neurellipes emkopoti (Larsen & Collins, 1998)
Mkpot Hairtail

Neurellipes GROUP 3

The ventral surfaces of these two species are quite similar. The white ventral lines are much wider in the females and in the **Silky Hairtail** *(N. lachares)*, the lines merge into patches. Dorsally the female of the **Mkpot Hairtail** *(N. emkopoti)* lacks the any yellow patches. The males both have a shiny dark violet-blue dorsal colour with a dark margin. The margin is narrower in ***N. lachares*** and there is usually also a hint of a yellow in the forewing patch, something never seen in ***N. emkopoti***. Both species are found in deep rainforest.

ADRIAN HOSKINS



MICHEL LIBERT

MICHEL LIBERT

Neurellipes emkopoti

Neurellipes lachares

CILIATE BLUES (LYCAENESTHINI – POLYOMMATINAE)

Neurellipes xanthopoecilus peteri Libert, 2010

Neurellipes GROUP 3

This species is rare in Nigeria, and only known from the Cross River region. The photos below show the nominate subspecies that is found in Central Africa. The ventral pattern of the photographed female is similar to that of the **Silky Hairtail** *(N. lachares)*, but **the Nigerian subspecies of *N. xanthopoecilus* has strongly reduced dorsal patches** in both sexes, so the species are not easy to confuse. The ventral pattern can look similar to that of the **Curious Hairtail** *(N. erythropoecilus)*, but the ground colour has an orange tone in the latter, while it is pure white in ***N. xanthopoecilus***.

NICK BAKER (ALL PHOTOS ON PAGE)

Neurellipes xanthopoecilus xanthopoecilus

CILIATE BLUES (LYCAENESTHINI – POLYOMMATINAE)

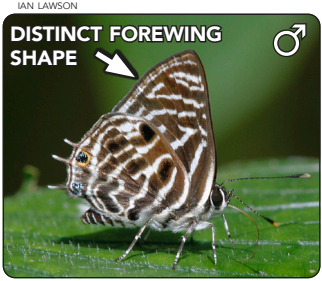
Neurellipes lysicles lysicles (Hewitson, 1874)
Violet-spotted Hairtail

Neurellipes GROUP 3

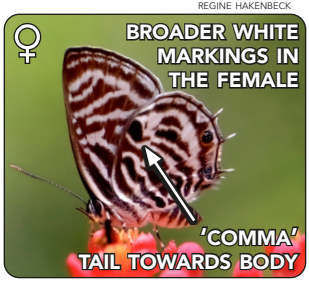
The male **Violet-spotted Hairtail** *(Neurellipes lysicles)* has distinct, well-defined, dark violet metallic patches on the dorsal surface. The female is less distinct, being dark brown with a few faint light markings on the hindwing. As the species is usually seen in the field with its wings closed over its back while resting, separating it from the four similar species on the next pages can be challenging. In most cases, the **Violet-spotted Hairtail** *(N. lysicles)* is the largest of these similar species. The male also has more pointed forewings and a pronounced angle along the outer margin (see red arrow). There is also a characteristic 'comma'-shaped mark at the hindwing costa. In ***N. lysicles*** the tail end of this mark is placed towards the body.

MICHEL LIBERT

IAN LAWSON



REGINE HAKENBECK



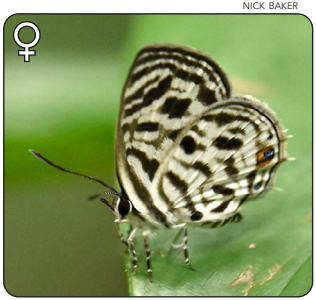
CILIATE BLUES (LYCAENESTHINI – POLYOMMATINAE)

Neurellipes lyzanius (Hewitson, 1874)
Black-patches Hairtail

Neurellipes GROUP 4

All species in ***Neurellipes* GROUP 4** have a particular blotched dorsal wing pattern with lighter spots or patches almost hidden under a thin dark layer of scales. The only species in this group that can be quite common is the **Black-patches Hairtail** *(Neurellipes lyzanius)* that is found in rainforests all over southern Nigeria. It can look similar to the **Yellow-spot Hairtail** *(N. flavomaculatus)*, but the latter has better developed dorsal spotting, especially in the female. There are also differences in how some of the light lines on the ventral forewing merge or not. Refer to the text by the images below for more details on how to identify the species.

NICK BAKER



MICHEL LIBERT

MICHEL LIBERT

'BLOTCHED' PATCHES, BETTER DEVELOPED IN THE FEMALE

NONE OF THE LOWER FORE-WING LINES MERGE

OUTER PAIR OF FOREWING LINES DONT MERGE

CILIATE BLUES (LYCAENESTHINI – POLYOMMATINAE)

Neurellipes f. flavomaculatus (Grose-Smith & Kirby [1893])
Neurellipes flavomaculatus bipuncta (Bethune-Baker, 1910)
Yellow-spot Hairtail

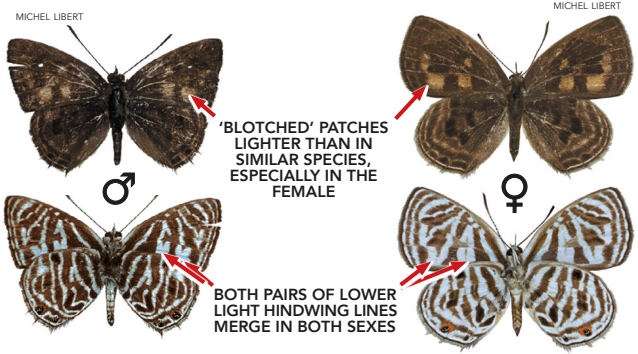
Neurellipes GROUP 4

The **Yellow-spot Hairtail** *(N. flavomaculatus)* has more pronounced dorsal spotting than any of the other members of ***Neurellipes* GROUP 4**. It can be mistaken for the **Black-pacthes Hairtail** *(N. lyzanius)*, but there are some important differences on the ventral side shown in the images below. The nominate subspecies ***flavomaculatus*** is found across the southern Nigerian forest zone. The more heavily spotted subspecies ***bipuncta*** has only been recorded in Nigeria from Kagoro forest, but given recent habitat destruction it might now be completely missing from the country.

MATT MUIR

MICHEL LIBERT

MICHEL LIBERT



Neurellipes lamprocles (Hewitson, 1878)
Lesser Black-patches Hairtail

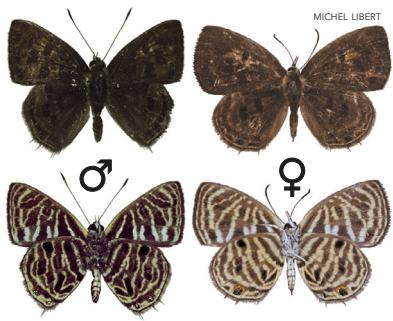
Neurellipes GROUP 4

Both sexes of the **Lesser Black-patches Hairtail** *(N. lamprocles)* are almost completely unmarked on the dorsal surface, but the typical blotched appearance of ***Neurellipes* GROUP 4** is still visible in good light. The light lines on the ventral side are so broad in both sexes that they megre together into large patches. All species with similar ventral patterns have more light markings on the dorsal surface.

Neurellipes boormani Libert, 2010

Neurellipes GROUP 4

Neurellipes boormani is only known from a small set of specimens collected in the Lagos area in the 1960s. The original habitat is likely to have been destroyed, and the species is possibly extinct. The dorsal wing surface is even darker than in the otherwise quite similar **Black-patches Hairtail** *(N. lyzanius)*.



Identification key for *Triclema*

This key uses the ventral patterns of the Nigerian *Triclema* species to narrow options down either to a species-group level, or species level.It is designed to work for both sexes. For some species there are better dorsal characters, especially for the males, meaning the key can be bypassed once you learn the key characters. Details are found on the individual species pages. ***Triclema melambrotus*** is not included in this key!

Clicking on the black boxes will take you straight to the page for each species or group

STEP 1

The submarginal forewing band is broken by the black base colour, sometimes a thin connection can be present if the band is wide.

→ *Triclema* **GROUP 1**

T. lucretilis
T. obsoleta
T. staudingeri

The submarginal band is intact and fairly even along the entire width of the wing.

→ **GO TO STEP 2**

STEP 2

The light sub-basal hindwing band is broken up into two sections.

→ *Triclema* **GROUP 2**

T. coerulea *T. phoenicis*
T. nigeriae *T. rufoplagata*

The sub-basal band stays intact along its length.

→ **GO TO STEP 3**

STEP 3

There are three white bands outside the sub-basal band almost reaching the costa, the outer being broad.

→ *T. inconspicua*

There are four white bands outside the sub-basal band almost reaching the costa.

→ **GO TO STEP 4**

STEP 4

The light sub-basal band bends outwards before getting close to the costa.

→ *T. lamias*

The light sub-basal band continues as a straight line, almost reaching the costa.

→ **GO TO STEP 5**

STEP 5

The outer hindwing lines merge at the apex forming a small rectangular patch.

→ *T. lacides*

Besides the apical patch there is a further patch formed by two merged bands in the hindwing cell.

→ *T. fasciatus*

CILIATE BLUES (LYCAENESTHINI – POLYOMMATINAE)

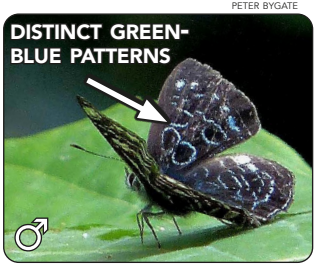
Triclema lucretilis (Hewitson, 1874)
Irrorated Ciliate Blue

Triclema GROUP 1

All of the species in *Triclema* **GROUP 1** have the submarginal band on the ventral forewing broken up into two parts (see below). Females in this group are hard to separate to species level with certainty, while the males all have unique dorsal patterns. The **Irrorated Ciliate Blue** *(Triclema lucretilis)* has multiple somewhat irregular and narrow metallic blue-green streaks. The female has faint lighter dorsal markings (not shown), somewhat similar to those of **Staudinger's Ciliate Blue** *(T. staudingeri)*, but usually less well developed. Like most other *Triclema* species, it is quite a rare forest species.

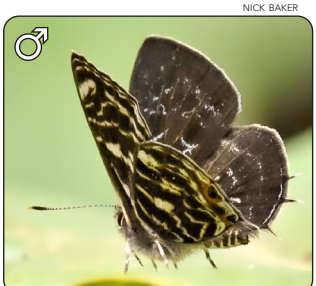
THOMAS DESLOGES

PETER BYGATE



NICK BAKER

NICK BAKER



CILIATE BLUES (LYCAENESTHINI – POLYOMMATINAE)

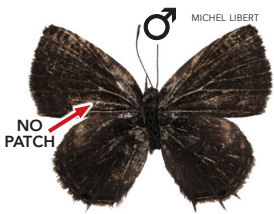
Triclema staudingeri (Grose-Smith & Kirby, 1894)
Staudinger's Ciliate Blue

Triclema GROUP 1

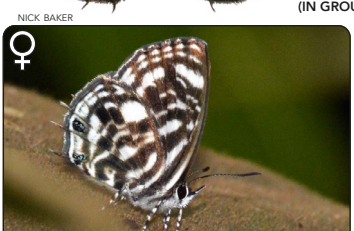
Triclema obsoleta (Stempffer, 1947)

Triclema GROUP 1

The male of **Staudinger´s Ciliate Blue** *(Triclema staudingeri)* has a dark blackish-brown dorsal colour, but with a distinct dark metallic violet patch close to the forewing base. The female is lighter with a row of diffuse spots on both wings, and a more prominent costal hindwing spot. The male of ***Triclema obsoleta*** can be identified by the lack of any dorsal metallic patches or streaks, but the females of all *Triclema* **GROUP 1** species are quite similar and hard to separate. Both species are found in southern Nigerian forests, but tend to be rare.



Triclema obsoleta



Triclema staudingeri

CILIATE BLUES (LYCAENESTHINI – POLYOMMATINAE)

Triclema phoenicis Karsch, 1893
Karsch's Ciliate Blue

Triclema GROUP 2

Triclema nigeriae (Aurivillius, 1905)
Nigerian Ciliate Blue

Triclema GROUP 2

Species in ***Triclema* GROUP 2** all have the inner of the light hindwing streaks broken up into two separate sections. The two species on this page are better adapted to drier habitats than the other in the species group. **Karsch's Ciliate Blue** *(T. phoenicis)* is found in forests, but has a good tolerance of drier habitats such as dense Guinea Savannah. The **Nigerian Ciliate Blue** *(T. nigeriae)* is a true savannah species found in most Guinea Savannah areas. The two species are similar and not always easy to tell apart. In general, *T. phoneics* is much darker than *T. nigeriae* on the ventral side, and the dorsal wing pattern have prominent white spotting in the latter, especially in females.

ALLEN HOLMES

OSKAR BRATTSTRÖM

Triclema phoenicis

ADEDOTUN AJIBADE

Triclema nigeriae

CILIATE BLUES (LYCAENESTHINI – POLYOMMATINAE)

Triclema rufoplagata ituriensis Joicey & Talbot, 1921
Orange-patch Ciliate Blue

Triclema GROUP 2

Triclema coerulea (Aurivillus, 1895)
Mauve Ciliate Blue

Triclema GROUP 2

Both sexes of the **Orange-Patch Ciliate Blue** *(Triclema rufoplagata)* have an orange patch on the dorsal forewing, which is larger in the female. The small black tooth in the cell sets them apart from the sometimes similar ***Neurellipes*** species. The male of the **Mauve Ciliate Blue** *(Triclema coerulea)* has a unique violet colour covering much of the dorsal surface, while the female (not shown) is dark brown with some light spotting. Both species are incredibly rare, and in Nigeria only known from the south-eastern rainforest zone.

BART WURSTEN

NICK BAKER

Triclema rufoplagata

MICHEL LIBERT

Triclema coerulea

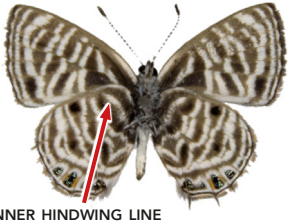
CILIATE BLUES (LYCAENESTHINI – POLYOMMATINAE)

Triclema lamias lamias (Hewitson, [1874])
Blotched Ciliate Blue

Triclema inconspicua inconspicua Druce, 1910
Inconspicuous Ciliate Blue

The male **Blotched Ciliate Blue** *(T. lamias)* has a distinct pattern of green-blue dorsal spots, similar to the **Irrorated Ciliate Blue** *(T. lucretilis)*. The female is less well marked, with faint grey spotting, but the ventral surface sets both sexes apart from all similar species. Both sexes of the **Inconspicuous Ciliate Blue** *(T. inconspicua)* are unmarked on the dorsal surface, but the outer pair of ventral hindwing submarinal bands merge at the costa. These are also merged in ***Triclema* GROUP 1** species, but in that group the forewing submarginal band is broken.

THOMAS DESLOGES



INNER HINDWING LINE TURNS OUTWARDS

THOMAS DESLOGES

IMAGE ABOVE SHOWS A MALE OF THE SUBSPECIES *LATEFASCIA* THAT IS MORPHOLOGICALLY SIMILAR TO A FEMALE OF THE NOMINATE *INCONSPICUA*.

RAINER WENDT

Triclema lamias

NICK BAKER

Triclema inconspicua

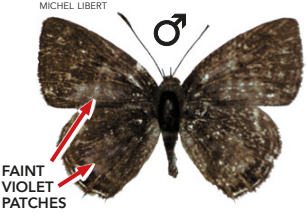
CILIATE BLUES (LYCAENESTHINI – POLYOMMATINAE)

Triclema fasciatus fasciatus (Aurivillius, 1895)
Triclema fasciatus subnitens (Bethune-Baker, 1903)
Tiny Ciliate Blue

Triclema lacides (Hewitson, 1874)
Delicate Ciliate Blue

The male **Tiny Ciliate Blue** *(T. fasciatus)* has a dark, quite obscure, violet patch at the base of the dorsal forewing, as well as on parts of the hindwing. The female lacks the violet patch, but has a row of light spots along the margin of both wings. Both sexes of the **Delicate Ciliate Blue** *(T. lacides)* are mostly unmarked on the dorsal surface, but the female can have some light spotting. The two species can be told apart by the way some of the light ventral lines merge on the hindwing. Both species can be found in forest habitats across southern Nigeria.

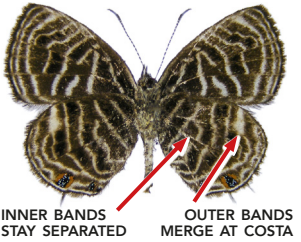
MICHEL LIBERT



LMIKE VNR (TREKNATURE USERNAME)

Triclema fasciatus

THOMAS DESLOGES

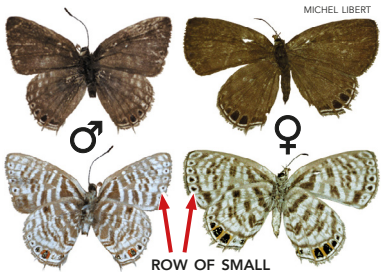


Triclema lacides

CILIATE BLUES (LYCAENESTHINI – POLYOMMATINAE)

Triclema melambrotus melambrotus (Holland, 1893)

Triclema melambrotus is only known in Nigeria via a single record from Eket. This small species is rare in collections, but the photos of the slightly worn individuals show the key character. Both sexes can be separated from all other ***Triclema*** species by the row of small black spots formed between the two outer white band on the ventral side of both wings.



Monile gemmifera maculata Libert, 2010
Jewelled Ciliate Blue

With a neat row of small shiny eyespots on the ventral hindwing, this species is very distinct. The dorsal surface is warm brown without any other patterns in both sexes. It is a tiny butterfly that is easily overlooked. In Nigeria it has been observed in Amurum Forest Reserve, close to Jos. These sightings are the only known records from the country, but it will certainly be present at many other sites.