

# Are there Populations of the Miami Blue, *Cyclargus thomasi bethunebakeri*, in Cuba?

Julie A. Craves

University of Michigan-Dearborn, Environmental Interpretive Center, Dearborn, MI 48128, jcraves@umd.umich.edu

For several winters, I have traveled to Cuba and coordinated bird surveys as part of licensed educational or outreach programs. When feasible, I also observe and record Lepidoptera. In February 2002, I observed a small lycaenid at Playa Larga, Matanzas province, near the head of Bahía de Cochinos (the Bay of Pigs). I identified it as *Cyclargus (Hemiargus) thomasi*, using Glassberg (1999). Upon my return home, I consulted Smith et al. (1994) and found that *C. thomasi* had not been recorded for Cuba, so (being an ornithologist) I dismissed my observation as a misidentification.

After my most recent trip, I was sorting through photographs taken by another trip participant, and came across three images taken in early February, 2004, at Cayo Paredon Grande, Ciego de Avila province, a small key off the north-central coast. These images are evidently *C. thomasi*. The diagnostic four basal hindwing spots are clearly visible. Giraldo Alayón, curator of entomology at the Museo Nacional de Historia Natural in Havana, concurred with this identification. Further, the photos appear to be the subspecies *bethunebakeri*, thought to be endemic to south Florida and recently (in late 2002) granted endangered species status there (FWC 2003). The photos were taken in an area of extensive coastal vegetation in beachside scrub.

I shortly became aware that Bob Yukich of Ontario had photographed *C. thomasi* in Cuba, in late January 2001, about 70 km west of Santiago de Cuba, Santiago de Cuba province, which is on the southern coast of Cuba in the far eastern part of the island. The photos also appear to be of *bethunebakeri*. He

reported seeing multiple individuals up to a half kilometer apart. This location is roughly 540 km from Cayo Paredon Grande.

There have been no published records of *C. thomasi* in Cuba (Bates 1935, Alayo and Hernández 1987, Smith et al. 1994). Calhoun et al. (2002) report that a butterfly similar to *C. thomasi* had been found in Cuba, but "its relationship is not clearly understood." There are five subspecies of *C. thomasi* in the West Indies (Smith et al. 1994). The populations closest to Cayo Paredon Grande are in the Bahamian Islands, *C. t. thomasi* and *C. t. bahamensis* (Smith et al. 1994). *Cyclargus t. clenchi* (of the Turks and Caicos) and *C. t. noeli* (of Hispanolia) are the populations nearest to Santiago de Cuba (Smith et al. 1994). None of these subspecies (as illustrated in Smith et al. 1994) match the Cayo Paredon Grande photographs as well as *bethunebakeri*, but clearly specimens need to be examined.

*Cyclargus thomasi bethunebakeri* was thought to be extirpated from Florida in 1992, but was rediscovered in 1999 (Calhoun et al. 2002). Meanwhile, the related Nickerbean Blue (*C. ammon* Lucas) was found to have colonized Big Pine Key in the Florida keys, probably as a result of natural immigration from Cuba, where it is common (Calhoun et al. 2002). Disregarding my Playa Larga sighting, of which I have no photos or notes, if the photos from Cayo Paredon Grande and Santiago de Cuba are of *C. thomasi bethunebakeri*, the insect would appear to be widespread in Cuba.

This opens up the possibility that *C. thomasi bethunebakeri* recolonized Florida from Cuba. Perhaps future field

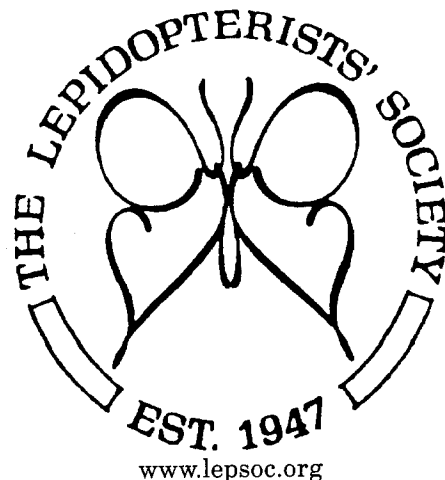
work will reveal robust *C. thomasi bethunebakeri* populations on Cuba.

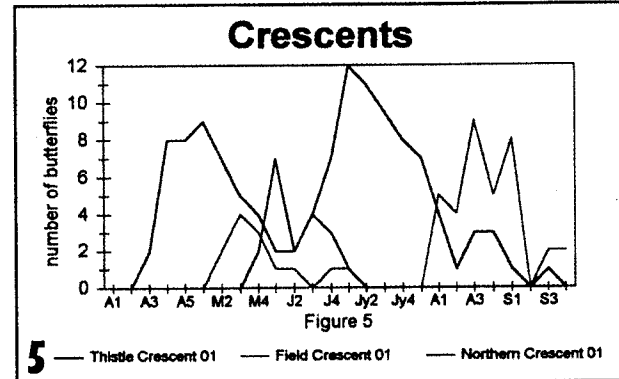
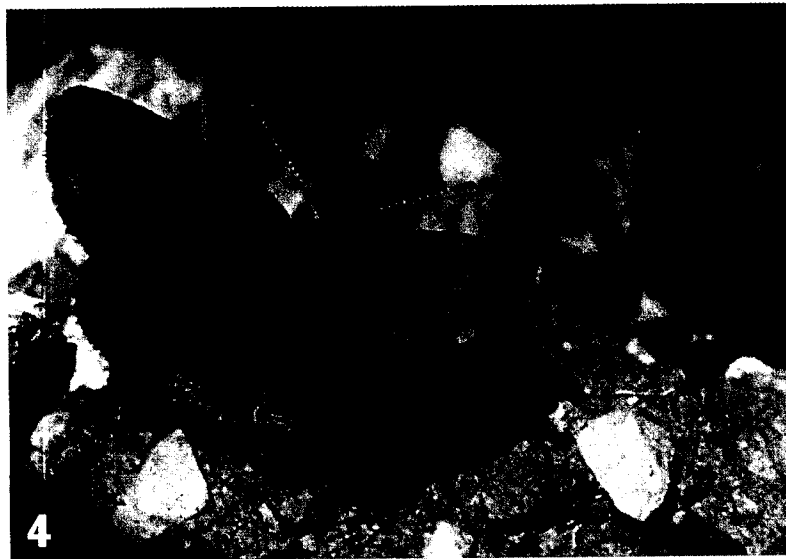
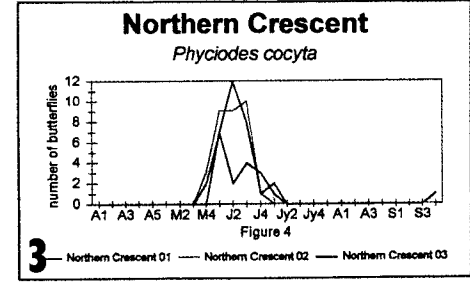
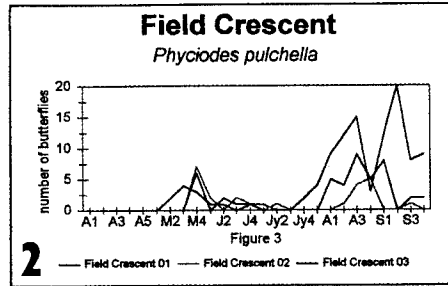
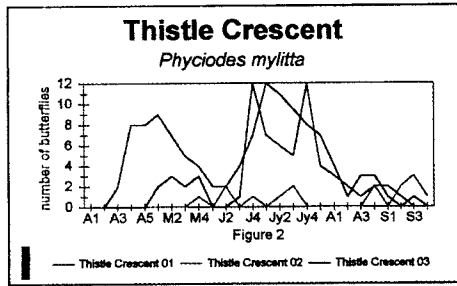
## Acknowledgements

Thanks to G. Markowski, D. O'Brien, and M. F. O'Brien; to S. Habel for photographing this butterfly; G. Alayón for examining the photograph; and W. Suarez for introducing me to Cayo Paredon Grande, as well as the rest of his beautiful country.

## Literature Cited

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### Crescent Butterflies of Big Springs Hollow, Utah

1/2/3. Abundance indices; 4. Northern Crescent, *Phyciodes coctya*; 5. Flight periods. See text (pp. 39) for details. Photo and charts by Alan R. Myrup.

### Marine Blues in Cuba?

Apparent *Cyclargus thomasi bethune-bakeri*, photographed 4 Feb. 2004 on Cayo Paredon Grande, Ciego de Avila province, Cuba. Photos by Steve Habel. See Julie Craves' article on pp. 43.

#### Classic Collecting Campaigns...

### Pinyon Crest

View of the native vegetation (left) and the drier east side (right). Photos by Kelly Richers. See his article on pp. 46.

