

Adelpha iphicles (Pointed Sister Butterfly)

Order: Lepidoptera (Butterflies and Moths)

Class: Insecta (Insects)

Phylum: Arthropoda (Arthropods)

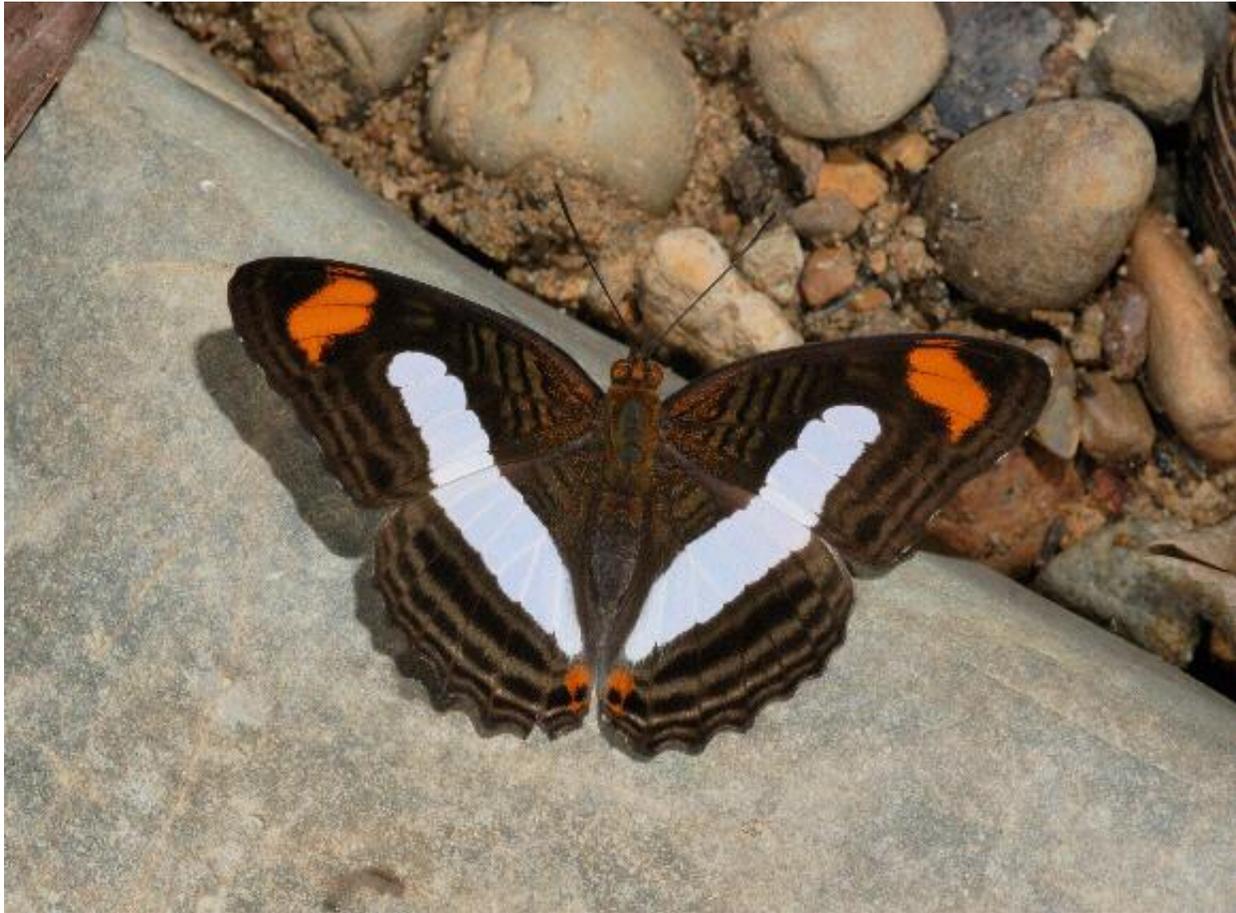


Fig. 1. Pointed sister butterfly, *Adelpha iphicles*.

[<http://www.learnaboutbutterflies.com/Amazon%20-%20Adelpha%20iphicles.htm>, downloaded 30 March 2015]

TRAITS. The wingspan of the pointed sister or iphicles sister butterfly is about 47mm, with brown ground colour, dark marbled pattern and the distinctive white bands on their forewings and hindwings (Fig. 1). They possess two antennae which have two grooves on the underside. Butterflies in this family (Nymphalidae) are also referred to as brush-footed or four-footed butterflies, as adults have a short or reduced pair of forelegs. Fully grown larvae are dark brown with two spines on their backs (Fig. 2). Their bodies are covered with hairs with projections on their heads, and their chrysalids are known for their characteristic shiny spots (Hoskins, 2015).

DISTRIBUTION. *Adelpha iphicles* is found mostly in the sub-tropics and tropics of Central and South America, specifically from Bolivia to Mexico and are also found in tropical forests of Trinidad, Venezuela, Ecuador, western Colombia, Peru, Brazil, and Surinam (Hoskins, 2015).

HABITAT AND ACITIVITY. The habitat of these butterflies consists mainly of evergreen, mixed pine-hardwood forest and oak dominated deciduous woodlands, having altitudes which range from 0-1,200m occasionally to 3000m. Areas with sunlight such as river sides, roads, paths, and other man-made habitat edges (anthropogenic) and areas where tree falls have caused forest openings are also attractive to these butterflies. These particular individuals are known to dominate in number compared to other butterflies in canopy traps (Willmott, 2003).

FOOD AND FEEDING. Young larvae nibble away at leaf tips, leaving behind the projecting midrib. They then build a chain of frass (droppings) along the midrib on which they rest. These frass chains seem to function as a deterrent to unwanted insects such as spiders, ants and parasitoids which have a hard time walking on them. *Adelpha* larvae can be often seen resting in the open, on the upper side of these damaged, old leaves (Freitas, 2006). Both male and female adults feed on over-ripe to rotting fruits such as *Genipa*, mango and *Guazuma* as a source of carbohydrates which provide energy and promote powered flight (Fig. 3). They also feed on the nectar of *Vochysia* and *Paullinia* flowers. Rotting carrion has also been discovered as a nutrient source for these butterflies. This is seen in adult males in particular in the form of mud-puddling where they seek out and consume liquefied dead and decaying plant and animal matter from mud puddles. Nectar from flowers and rotting fruit are both sources of carbohydrates, serving as an energy source which fuels powered flight. Rotting carrion also provides sodium which is important as it increases the mating success of the male and promotes reproductive success in females.

POPULATION ECOLOGY. Research has suggested that this species, in the adult stages, is found in most abundance in the wet season and the beginning of the dry season which occur between May and August in eastern regions and January to June in western regions. This observation is proven by a study conducted in Panama, where these foliage-feeding butterflies were discovered in much more abundance during the wet season, accounted for by the new plant growth which occurs around that time. On the other hand, it was discovered that most of this species found in Costa Rica were more plentiful in the dry season. A study done in Ecuador also reported that abundance was highest during the wet season. It was also discovered that the number of males outweighed the number of females in a ratio of approximately 4:1.

REFERENCES

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Fig. 2. *Adelpha iphicles* larva.

[http://www.butterfliesofamerica.com/L/adelpha_i_iphicles.htm, downloaded 8 April 2015]

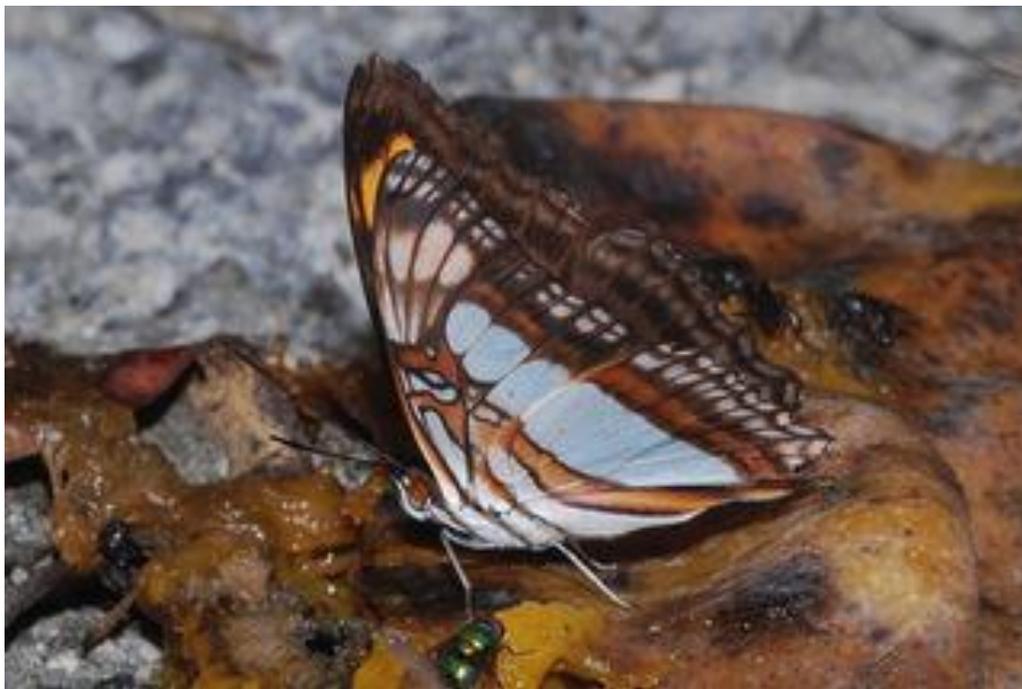


Fig. 3. *Adelpha iphicles* feeding on rotting fruit.

[<http://www.discoverlife.org/mp/20q?search=Adelpha>, downloaded 8 April 2015]



Fig. 4. *Adelpha iphicles* exhibiting 'mud-puddling' behaviour.

[www.projectnoah.com, downloaded 8 April 2015]

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