

Short communication

LITTLE TIGER BLUE, *TARUCUS BALKANICUS* (FREYER, 1845) –
A NEW BUTTERFLY SPECIES IN THE FAUNA OF SERBIA
(LEPIDOPTERA: LYCAENIDAE)

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The butterfly fauna (Lepidoptera: Papilionoidea) of Serbia comprises 200 species in total, giving Serbia a high position on the list of butterfly-rich European countries (Popović & Verovnik, 2018; Milojković *et al.*, 2021). Popović & Verovnik (2018) revised the checklist of Serbian butterflies and concluded that the actual number of species amounted to 199 species, but in 2020 one new species was discovered in the city of Niš – the geranium bronze (*Cacyreus marshalli* Butler, 1897), bringing the number of species to 200.

Little tiger blue, *Tarucus balkanicus* (Freyer, 1845) (Lepidoptera: Lycaenidae) is a local butterfly species distributed in the Balkans and certain parts of Africa and Asia. In the Balkans, this species can be found locally in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Albania, Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey. The host plant of this butterfly in the Balkans is Christ's thorn (*Paliurus spina-christi* Mill.) (Lelo, 2000; Tolman & Lewington, 2008; Verovnik *et al.*, 2010; Šašić & Mihoci, 2011; Verovnik & Popović, 2013; Hristova & Beshkov, 2017; Franeta, 2018).

During project activities conducted in the territory of the Landscape of Outstanding Features "Dolina Pčinje" in 2021, *T. balkanicus* was registered for the first time in Serbia. In April 2021, the authors visited the area and checked potential habitats for the presence of the host plant. In three subsequent visits, the butterfly was not registered. Finally, in August 2021, six specimens were observed and photographed. Two male specimens were collected, prepared by standard procedure and are kept in the first author's private collection.

***Tarucus balkanicus* (Freyer, 1845)** (Fig. 1)

Data: Landscape of Outstanding Features "Dolina Pčinje", Čivčije, 42°18'46" N, 21°52'48" E, 04-05.08.2021, 2 ♂♂, leg. I. Tot.

Remarks: Six specimens were observed and three of them were photographed. The specimens were active during an extremely warm day, with a temperature peak of 42°C, and flew together with *Pyrgus malvae* (Linnaeus, 1758), *Plebejus argus* (Linnaeus, 1758), *Polyommatus icarus* (Rottemburg, 1775), *P. daphnis* (Denis & Schiffermüller, 1775), *Lysandra bellargus* (Rottemburg, 1775), *Celastrina argiolus* (Linnaeus, 1758), *Leptotes pirithous* (Linnaeus, 1767), *Favonius quercus* (Linnaeus, 1758), *Lycaena phlaeas* (Linnaeus, 1761), *Iphiclides podalirius* (Linnaeus, 1758), *Leptidea duponcheli* (Staudinger, 1871), *Colias alfacariensis* Ribbe, 1905, *Colias croceus* (Fourcroy, 1785), *Araschnia levana* (Linnaeus, 1758), *Maniola jurtina* (Linnaeus, 1758), *Pararge aegeria* (Linnaeus, 1758), *Coenonympha pamphilus* (Linnaeus, 1758), *Hipparchia statilinus* (Hufnagel, 1766), *Argynnis paphia* (Linnaeus, 1758), *Limenitis reducta* Staudinger, 1901 and *Neptis sappho* (Pallas, 1771).

Behavior: The specimens were observed resting on *Ulmus* sp. and *Paliurus spina-christi* leaves and visiting *Rubus* sp. flowers.

Description of habitat: Dry, grassy meadow on slopes, with numerous shrubs of the host plants *Paliurus spina-christi* and *Ulmus* sp., *Rosa* sp., *Rubus* sp. and *Juniperus oxycedrus* L (Fig. 2). The meadow is bordered by a xerothermic *Quercus* forest and the Pčinja river, with *Alnus* and *Populus nigra* var. *italica* trees on the river bank.

Serbian name proposal: драчац/dračac. The name was inspired by the host plant *Paliurus spina-christi* (Srb. драча/drača or драч/drač). Although a suggested Serbian name exists on the Biologer site (Popović et al., 2020), “balkanski tigrić”, we suggest a different Serbian name – dračac. The reason for this suggestion is practical, as one-word names are easier to remember and more commonly used by enthusiasts or professional entomologists. The name “dračac” also appears on the Alchiphron site (Miljević et al., 2021).



Figure 1. *Tarucus balkanicus* on *Rubus* sp. buds. Photo by I. Tot.



Figure 2. The habitat and the host plant of *Tarucus balkanicus* in Serbia. Photo by M. Djurić.

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ДРАЧАЦ, *TARUCUS BALKANICUS* (FREYER, 1845) – НОВА ВРСТА ДНЕВНОГ ЛЕПТИРА ЗА ФАУНУ СРБИЈЕ (LEPIDOPTERA: LYCAENIDAE)

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Извод

Фауна дневних лептира Србије је богатија за још једну врсту дневног лептира - *Tarucus balkanicus* (Freyer, 1845). Током истраживања Предела изузетних одлика „Долина Пчиње“, 3. и 4. августа на локалитету Чивчије забележено је укупно 6 јединки ове врсте. Биљка хранитељка ове врсте је драча (драч) - *Paliurus spina-christi*, на основу које је предложено и народно име за *T. balkanicus* – драчац.

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