

ANT TENDING OF *ARHOPALA* LARVAE IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA (LEPIDOPTERA: LYCAENIDAE)

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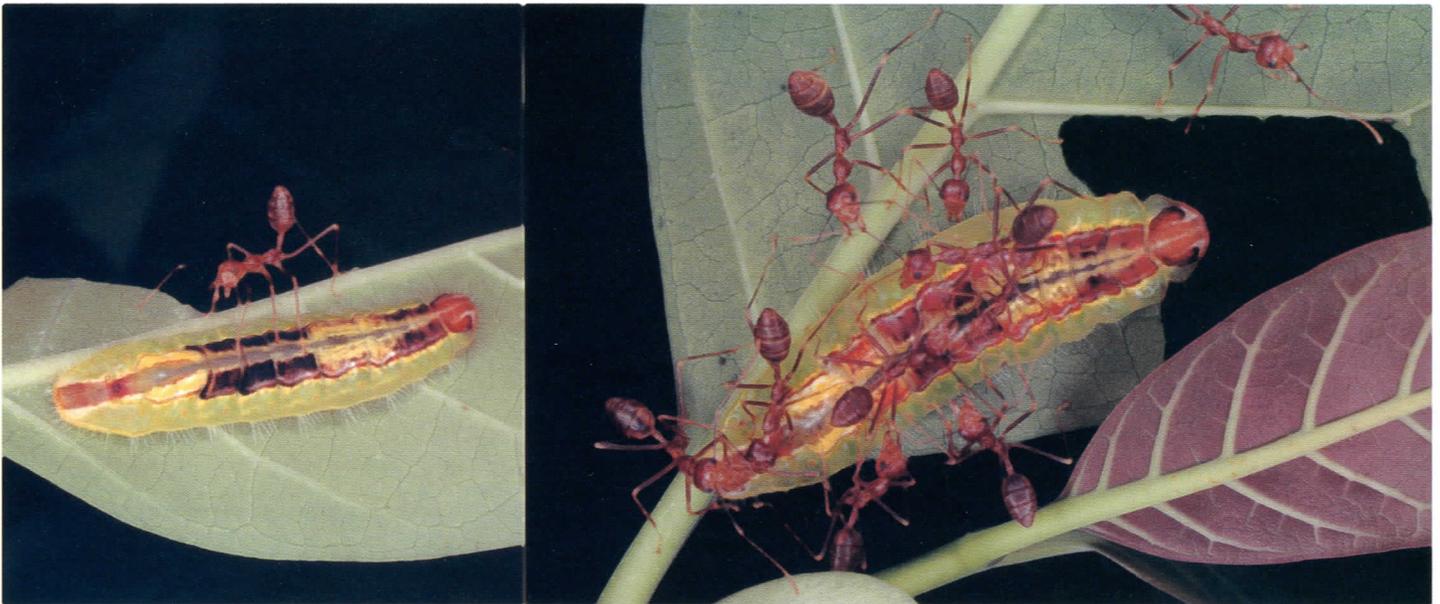


Fig. 1-2. *Arhopala centaurus philtron* larvae tended by *Oechyphylla* sp. ants, in Papua New Guinea (base of Hunstein Mts., 23 mi. SW of Ambunti, East Sepik Prov., 11 Aug 1997).

The larvae of Lycaenidae are known to be tended and protected by various kinds of ants. During an expedition in the East Sepik Province of Papua New Guinea in August 1997, I noticed several adult *Arhopala centaurus philtron* Fruhstorfer take flight from a group of tall shrubs. Closer inspection of the plants revealed five lycaenid larvae feeding independently on the undersides of leaves. All larvae were attended to by ants of the genus *Oechyphylla* (Formicidae). The ants were seen patrolling the branches of the plants and up to a dozen were in the immediate vicinity of each lycaenid larva. When larvae were disturbed, more ants arrived and rested near or on the lycaenid larvae. The unidentified shrubs were next to a stream surrounded by primary rainforest. Lycaenid larvae were located under leaves about 4-6 feet above the ground.