

NEW HOSTPLANT RECORD FOR *AELLOPOS TANTALUS* FROM THE FLORIDA KEYS (LEPIDOPTERA: SPHINGIDAE)

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Tuskes (1980) described the life history of *Aellopos tantalus* (Linnaeus) from immatures that he found on Seven-Year Apple (*Casasia clusiifolia* (Jacq.) Urban (Rubiaceae) in the Florida Keys. During May 1987, I found eggs and first instar larvae of *A. tantalus* on the young leaves of *C. clusiifolia* on Big Pine Key. These plants were growing in a narrow strip of tropical hardwood forest along the southern shore of the island, near Cactus Hammock. Seven-Year Apple is also sparingly present on Elliott Key in Biscayne National Park. Although I have searched the leaves of these plants annually since 1986, I have not found immatures of *A. tantalus*. However, adults of *A. tantalus* are occasionally seen flying during the day along rocky trails on Elliott Key. The adults will sometimes perch on the undersides of leaves.

On 2 June 1990, Jeanne M. Parks (Florida Department of Natural Resources Biologist, Key Largo Hammocks State Botanical Site) and I found a single mature larva of *A. tantalus* (Figure 1) feeding on the leaves of Buttonwood, *Conocarpus erecta* L. (Combretaceae) on northern Key Largo. This caterpillar had eaten many of the younger leaves from a Buttonwood sprout approximately 0.5m tall growing in the middle of a trail through Avery Hammock. Buttonwood is a common shrub or small tree found in seasonally flooded depressions and areas transitional to mangroves throughout the Keys. This observation is the first record of an *Aellopos* species feeding on a host outside of the Rubiaceae (Hodges 1971, Haber and Frankie 1983, Young 1985).



Fig. 1. Mature larva of *Aellopos tantalus* on buttonwood.

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