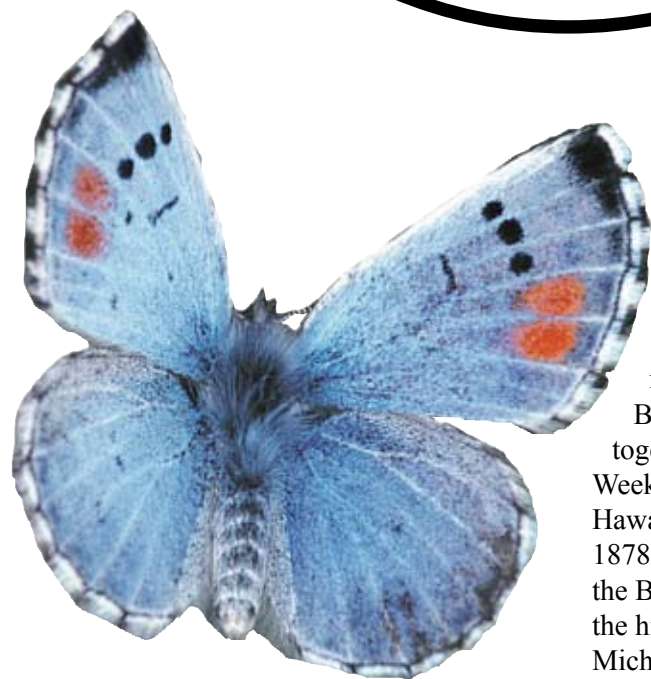


TAXONOMISTS JUST WANNA HAVE FUN

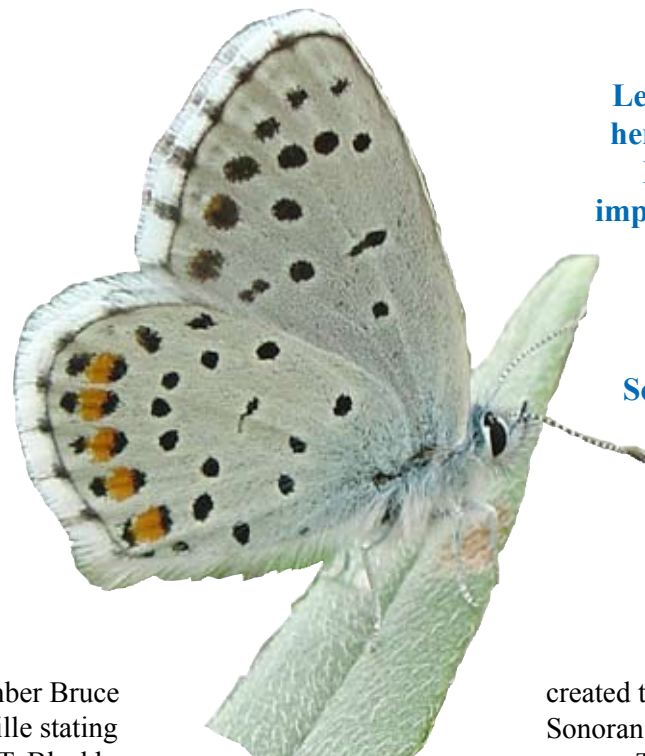
TRUE BLUE

PART TWO

by Harry Zirlin



In my last article, I ended by saying that I had not identified the person for whom Hawaiian Blue, *Vaga blackburni*, was named. Further research has presented me with the nineteenth century entomological Blackburn brothers, T. and J.B., who together founded a journal named *The Weekly Entomologist* in 1862. Surely Hawaiian Blue was named by Tuely in 1878 for one of the brothers. I learned of the Blackburn brothers in a book about the history of butterfly study in Britain by Michael Salmon titled “*The Aurelian Legacy*” (University of California Press, 2000). I also received an email recently from NABA



Left: Are baton blues (shown here is an eastern baton blue, *Pseudophilotes vicrama*) imposters and buckwheat blues the real deal? July 12, 2005. Catak, Van, Turkey.

Opposite page: A male Sonoran Blue. Neither false nor true, but the original! Feb. 27, 1998. Plum Canyon, Anza-Borrego SP, CA.

member Bruce Neville stating that T. Blackburn co-authored an article with Tuely in 1878 concerning another Hawaiian species. Thus, it appears to me that the scientific name of Hawaiian Blue was most likely named for T. Blackburn.

To pick up the checklist of blues where we left off, we come to Sonoran Blue, *Philotes sonorensis*, which is one of the four gems that grace the cover of the second edition of NABA’s *Checklist and English Names of North American Butterflies*. Sonoran Blue is one of the most exquisite butterflies in our fauna, with its unexpected combination of the complementary colors orange and blue on the upperside FW, accented by black markings and stark white fringes. The species was named by C. and R. Felder in 1865 and *sonorensis* simply means “from Sonora” a reference to its habitat in the Sonoran Desert, although its range actually extends out of the Sonoran Desert as well.

The genus was named for Philotes, a minor Greek goddess and the personification of affection. Scudder gave her name to the genus he created in 1876. When Scudder

created the genus *Philotes*, he designated Sonoran Blue as the type species of the genus. Thus, if a later taxonomist decided that Sonoran Blue and the other species that had been placed in *Philotes* actually should be placed in different genera, Sonoran Blue would remain in *Philotes*. That is precisely what happened more than one hundred years after Scudder created *Philotes* when, in 1977, Rudolf Mattoni split *Philotes*, making Sonoran Blue the only member of the genus *Philotes* and placed all other North American species in the new genus *Euphilotes*, except Small Blue, *Philotiella speciosa*, which he placed in another new genus. (*Philotiella* means “small *Philotes*” and was given to this genus for the same reason the species is named Small Blue in English.) *Speciosa*, named by Henry Edwards in 1876, means “showy,” an appellation often bestowed on flowers.

The “Eu” prefix in *Euphilotes* means “true” or “good.” Professor Mattoni chose the name *Euphilotes* because, as he explained to me recently, it had long been clear to a number of taxonomists that most of the other species then placed in the genus *Philotes* — Square-Spotted Blue, now *Euphilotes battoides*, Dotted Blue, now *Euphilotes*