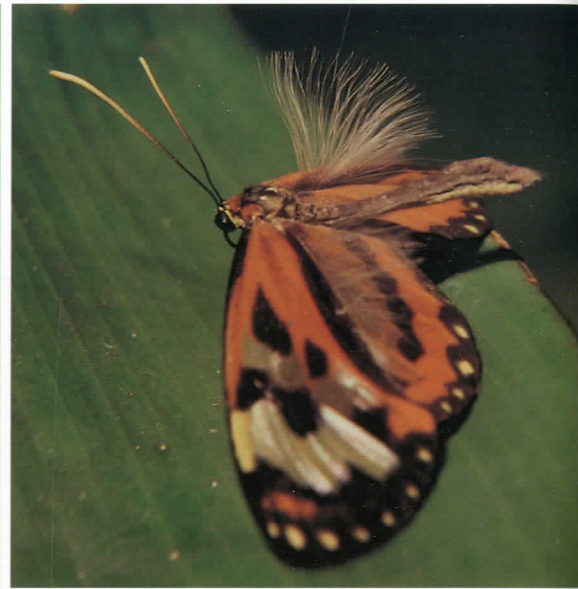


# A BUTTERFLY LEK: ITHOMIINE HAIRPENCILS (LEPIDOPTERA: NYMPHALIDAE)

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Male ithomiine butterflies displaying their hairpencils to attract mates, in the FAUTRON Tropical Rainforest Reserve, Fazenda Rancho Grande, near Cacauplandia, Rondônia, Brazil, 3 Jan 1991. (© 1995 Gary N. Ross)

A lek, coined to describe bird behavior, is a communal display of males to attract females for mating. Ithomiine leks are common within American tropical rainforests and can be composed of numerous species and genera (often with pierid and riodinid mimics joining the display). The hairpencils of the ithomiines shown here are extended in order to release pheromones that attract not only potential mates, but additional males, which in turn also join the display. Leks may consist of dozens of individuals and occupy nearly half an acre of forest. Such leks may last several days at a time.