

# POLLEN GATHERING: HELICONIINES COLLECTING POLLEN (LEPIDOPTERA: NYMPHALIDAE)

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Heliconiine butterflies collecting pollen as a source of proteins, in the FAUTRON Tropical Rainforest Preserve, Fazenda Rancho Grande, near Cacauplandia, Rondônia, Brazil, 16 Jan 1991. (© 1995 Gary N. Ross)

Many heliconiines collect pollen, particularly from vines in the family Cucurbitaceae (genera *Psiguria* and *Gurania* are known to be used). The particles of yellow pollen are combined with saliva to make a cocktail that is siphoned up through the proboscis. Supposedly, the butterflies acquire amino acids from the pollen grains, and utilize these in metabolic pathways involved in longevity and pheromone production. Heliconiines live up to 11 or 12 months, considerably longer than most other butterflies.