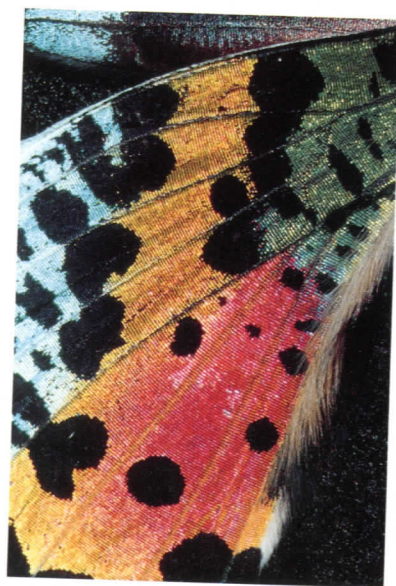


WORLD'S MOST BEAUTIFUL LEPIDOPTERAN?

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Although beauty is subjective, most entomologists seem to agree that the Madagascan sunset moth, *Chrysidia riphearia* Hübner (incorrectly called *C. madagascariensis* or *C. ripheus*)—not a butterfly—is the paragon of the Lepidoptera. The species is large, tailed, and cloaked with multi-colored iridescent scales, both dorsally and ventrally. Besides resembling a swallowtail butterfly in appearance, *C. riphearia* also is active during the day (in contrast to most moths), has a flight pattern similar to that of swallowtails, and socializes at mud puddles along with numerous butterfly species. The Madagascan sunset moth is relatively common in the dry season throughout eastern sectors of the island of Madagascar, the world's fourth largest island and located east of continental Africa. Although *C. riphearia* is truly opulent, other members of its pantropical family, Uraniidae, are quite spectacular, too. A related and similar species of *Chrysidia* occurs in southern Africa, *C. croesus* (Gerstaecker). The species of *Urania* are all tropical American members of this family.

Fig. 1-2. *Chrysidia riphearia*, collected in Andasibe (Perinet), Madagascar, 25 Nov 1993 (specimens photographed in Baton Rouge, La.): 1) male, dorsal (above). 2) wing detail of ventral hindwing (left).