NOTES ON THE TYPE AND TYPE COLLECTOR OF PARNASSIUS BEHRII (PAPILIONIDAE)

Parnassius behrii was described by W. H. Edwards (1870, Trans. Amer. Entomol. Soc. 3: 11) from a California specimen that he had received from H. H. Behr. In his treatment of the types of butterflies named by W. H. Edwards, F. M. Brown (1975, Trans. Amer. Entomol. Soc. 101: 1-31) gives the type locality of Parnassius behrii as “near the summit of Mt. Lyell, Yosemite Valley, California” and cites J. W. [sic M.] Hutchings as the collector. Brown relied on Henry Edwards (1878, Proc. Cal. Acad. Sci. 11-14) for this information. On p. 12 Edwards stated that “P. behrii was taken by Mr. J. W. [sic] Hutchings, formerly of Yosemite Valley, near the top of Mt. Lyell, at an altitude of nearly 11,000 ft.” On p. 13, he further relates that the type of behrii was taken by Mr. Hutchings.

This information is in error. J. M. Hutchings could not have collected the types of P. behrii on Mount Lyell. Hutchings (see accompanying note, J. Lepid. Soc. 34: 68) lived in Yosemite Valley from 1862 until 1902. He reported on his climb of Mount Lyell in his book (Hutchings, 1886, In the Heart of the Sierras, priv. publ.), and while he does not give the dates of his climb, he states that the climb was inspired by John Muir’s report of a “live glacier” on Mount Lyell. He further states that he found the card of a Mr. Tileston on the summit some ten days after it had been left. This information is a bit conflicting as Muir (1872, Overland Monthly, Dec.) indicated that he discovered the glacier in October 1871. Tileston (1922, Letters of John Boies Tileston, Boston, privately printed) wrote that he reached the summit “on Monday the 28th August, 1871.” Possibly Hutchings mistook the date on Tileston’s card, but in either case, he did not make the climb before late in the summer of 1871 and even more likely before the summer of 1872. Edwards had described Parnassius behrii in January or February of 1870.

While Hutchings could have collected the types of P. behrii, he could not have collected them on Mt. Lyell. He undoubtedly did, however, collect the specimens that came into the hands of Henry Edwards. It is much more likely that the types of P. behrii were collected by members of the California State Geological Survey, who supplied Behr with most of his “High Sierra” materials, during the summers of 1863 or 1864. W. H. Brewer and C. F. Hoffman, of the Survey, were the first to climb Mount Lyell, the mountain which they discovered and named, on 2 July 1863.