Simple method for protecting antennae when papering lepidoptera specimens

by

Vernon Antoine Brou Jr. 70420 Jack Loyd Road, Abita Springs, Louisiana 70420  E-mail: vabrou@bellsouth.net

My personal initial indoctrination to papering dead insect specimens began in the 1960s as a young teen age collector as a method to exchange specimens with other collectors using the mail. Most information
published about this subject involved the use of paper or glassine paper triangles. Simply placing the freshly captured adult into a prefolded triangle, then fold to close the triangle. A few collectors developed their own little improvements to this simple method of triangle specimen storage. Numerous authors e.g. Winter (2000) addressed this subject illustrating how to fold your own paper triangles and discussed and illustrated the use of commonly available letter envelopes. Winter also illustrated and discussed a method of flat papering lepidoptera (Meyer, 1988) and Tindale’s (1961) method of boxing multiple fresh moth specimens between layers of tissue placed in a box containing chlorocresol crystals. Other interesting variations on these methods are also discussed e.g. papering fresh specimens placing them in plastic containers using chlorocresol crystals and then into a freezer, months later could be spread upon defrosting.

Winter (2000) illustrated a method of protecting antennae from breakage once papered and the lessening of side flattening of large bodied specimens, which I have used as it works well for ova filled females of sphingidae and saturnidae.

Over the years I further tweaked such methods for my own use for protecting antennae and for papering large bodied specimens of butterflies and moths. I have always been frustrated when I received beautiful papered lepidoptera specimens only to find the antennae broken into many pieces. For many years, I placed specimens with the antennae manipulated with a tweezers into envelopes then removing tweezers carefully once in the bottom of the envelope so that the sides of the envelope hold the antennae against the specimen’s thorax. I have further improved on this idea by placing the specimens inverted into the envelope so that the bottom as well as the sides of the envelope protect the antennae. The inverted specimen resting in the envelope such that the head and costal margin of the forewings rest upon the bottom of the envelope also lessens the flattening of the sides of the specimen’s abdomen, its position to a more flexible position away from the edges of the envelope. Still further refining this method, I have found that along with the addition of a small piece of cut paper towel is somewhat foolproof in protecting antennae even lessening antennae damage when using flimsy glassine paper triangles. I have provided an image presentation (1-11) on how to go about using this simple method.

**Literature cited**

