

FOR: PYRCZ
FROM: PAUL TOYNE (1999)

Isobel's butterfly

Six-year-old Isobel Talks has had a species of butterfly named after her, after her grandmother entered a competition on the butterfly-crazy little girl's behalf.

The new butterfly was recently discovered by Dr Paul Toyne, an International Conservation Officer for the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), on an expedition to Ecuador, in the foothills of the Andes. By tradition, the butterfly should have been named after Dr Toyne, but he decided to waive that right and raise some money to support conservation work in Ecuador.

A competition to name the butterfly was held. Isobel's was the entry drawn, and she was presented with a special photograph of the butterfly with her name, at a ceremony at Syon House, London's premier Butterfly House, near Brentford.

There could hardly have been a more appropriate

winner - Isobel adores butterflies! Both Isobel and her grandmother, Mrs Moynihan, were delighted. "Isobel is so keen on butterflies that she had a special dress, which was covered in butterflies, made for her sixth birthday," said Mrs Moynihan.

The common name given to the new species will be "Isobel's butterfly", and it belongs to a group of species (a genus) called *Pronophila*. It was found in Podocarpus National Park, the only protected area in the region. The discovery of this new species, combined with the rest of the survey results (over 280 species identified) confirm how biologically important the Park is. Some 90 per cent of the Andean forest in this region has been cleared and this discovery really brings home the message that habitats and species are being destroyed faster than we are discovering them. WWF believes that the importance

of these remaining forests and national parks is vital for all of the species in the region - not just the butterflies.

Isobel with the butterfly's discoverer, Dr Paul Toyne



Isobel with the new butterfly

Isobel's butterfly -

The facts:

- *Pronophila* butterflies like Isobel's are among the largest South American cloud forest brown butterflies.
- Isobel's butterfly is medium sized with a wing span of around eight to ten centimetres.
- So far, there is no published information about the caterpillars of Isobel's butterfly, or the plants they eat, but they most probably feed on *Chusquea* mountain bamboo, like most other cloud forest brown butterflies.
- *Pronophila* butterflies all have a similar wing shape - triangular forewings with rounded edges, rounded hindwings with a smooth or scalloped edge, and no 'tails'. Their colour patterns are simple - a dark brown upper surface, generally with a series of white or orange patches extending along the veins.
- The adult butterflies perch on vegetation and patrol the subcanopy level of the forest, but they sometimes fly down to the forest floor to feed on rotting material.
- *Pronophila* butterflies inhabit Andean mountain cloud forests at altitudes above 1,000 metres and as high as 3,000 metres.
- There are approximately 20 species of *Pronophila* butterflies distributed from Costa Rica to Northern Argentina.
- Isobel's butterfly is so far only known from this small area situated in south western Ecuador, in the Loja province.

