



## NATURE

## Winged Gems of Ecuador

*Biodiversity paradise*

In 250 acres of Ecuador's lowland rain forest, some 1,700 species of butterflies may be found flying together, say Jason Hall of the Smithsonian Institution and Keith Willmott of the University of Florida. Together they have studied nearly all of them. A fast-flying male *Anteros kupris* (top left), which maintains a territory in the canopy to locate mates, seeks sodium



ALL BY KEITH WILLMOTT AND JASON HALL

by feeding on carrion and salty foods. A male *Anteros renaldus* (above) sports spectacularly tasseled leggings.

Many butterflies, though not poisonous themselves, mimic species that are toxic. One mimic, *Stalactis phaedusa* (top right), always lands upside down on a leaf with wings open and thus betrays its identity. The poisonous model it resembles alights upright with wings closed.

One of the clearwing butterflies, a male *Oleria quadrata* (left) feeds on an aster. Its alkaloids make him distasteful. He passes the alkaloids' protection to females when they mate.