These data refer to experiments and field collections regarding cyanogenesis (cyanide production) in adult *Heliconius* and related butterfly species, *Dryas* *iulia* and *Agraulis* *vanillae*. Data were collected as part of the dissertation work of the first author (1996-1999).

Column headings:

1. **experiment**: a code referring to the specific experiment performed.
   1. p\_np#: experiments with adult diets: sugar-only (np) or amino acid (p); fresh refers to freshly-emerged adults which were frozen after emerging from the pupa (see material and methods for more details)
   2. fresh\_only: experiment consisted of raising larvae on a *Passiflora biflora* diet and freezing adult soon after it emerged from pupa. Adults did not feed on experimental diets.
   3. phyloge: experiment comparing the cyanide content of freshly-emerged adults of *Heliconius charithonia, Dryas iulia* and *Agraulis vanilla*.
   4. mexico: comparison of cyanide content of field caught adult *Heliconius* butterflies.
2. **species**: names of the species used in the experiments: hecale – *Heliconius hecale*; charithonia – *Heliconius charithonia*; ethilla – ; cydno – *Heliconius cydno*; agraullis – *Agraulis vanillae*; dryas – *Dryas iulia*, erato – *Heliconius erato*; ismenius – *Heliconius ismenius*
3. **treat**: experimental treatments: np – sugar only; p – amino acid diet; fresh – freshly emerged adults; field – field collected adults
4. **sex**: f – females; m – males; ? – ND
5. **mass\_mg**: adult dry mass
6. **mmol\_cn**: micromole of cyanide (total cyanide content)
7. **mmol\_mg**: micromole of cyanide per unit mass (cyanide concentration)
8. **hardcopy index**: printout of the data, maintained in the lab as backup

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