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NOTE

ADDITIONAL RECORD OF THE POORLY KNOWN ARGUS *PARALASA NEPALICA* (PAULUS, 1983) (INSECTA: LEPIDOPTERA: NYMPHALIDAE) IN NEPAL

Sanej Prasad Suwal, Krishna Dev Hengaju & Naresh Kusi

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ADDITIONAL RECORD OF THE POORLY KNOWN ARGUS *PARALASA NEPALICA* (PAULUS, 1983) (INSECTA: LEPIDOPTERA: NYMPHALIDAE) IN NEPAL

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The genus *Paralasa* (Moore, 1891) belongs to the family Nymphalidae which is also linked to the genus *Callerebia*. The recent molecular phylogeny support Miller (1968) who proposed the placement of *Paralasa* within the *Callerebia* series of Ypthimina (Peña et al. 2006), however, the life history and karyotype study by Sauracov & Emmel (2008) showed no new evidence supporting its affinity with Ypthimina. It is usually distributed in the higher mountains of central Asia (NW-Himalaya, Szechwan, East Tibet, Karakorum, Pamir, Tien Shan, Hindukush (Vis & Coene 1987).

This genus is easily identifiable by the presence of a distinct row of 5–7 white points on the underside of the hindwing in the female and reduced white in the male. The underside of females is bicolor since forewing apex and the whole hindwing are covered with a dense layer of

whitish-grey scales. The apex of the forewing is sharpened, the eye-spot is round with a single white pupil (Churkin & Tuzov 1998). The female is somewhat bigger than the male.

There are 30 species of *Paralasa* recorded globally (NHM 2018) and Nepal is home to a single species, *Paralasa nepalica*. In 1973, *Paralasa* material was collected from northwestern Nepal by Martens. The material was studied by Paulus (1982), who realized that the species was new and described it as *P. nepalica*, representing the easternmost species of the genus *Paralasa* (Vis & Coene 1987). The species is considered endemic to Nepal (Smith 1994).

After the first collection by Martens in 1973 (Vis & Coene 1987), there have been only two additional records till date, one from Chya lekh, Mahakali, northwestern Nepal, at an elevation of 3,740m (Morishita & Innomata 1998) and another above Phoksumdo Village, Dolpa, at 3,500m (Sourakov & Emmel 2008). This is the fourth observation record of this species in Nepal, obtained about 166km north-west from Dolpa and 68.7km north-east from Chya lekh, Darchula, Nepal. Also, no photograph of this species is known to have been taken yet in its natural habitat. The photograph presented here is most likely to be the first for this species in its natural habitat.

We observed the butterfly in Talung Valley (30.203°N & 81.700°E, 4,400m) of upper Humla, Province - 6, on 27 July 2017 at 1:30hr. The butterfly was basking by the roadside along with two other butterflies—Indian Tortoiseshell *Aglaia cashmirensis* and Lofty Bath White *Pontia callidice*.

Like most *Paralasa* species, *P. nepalica* is mentioned



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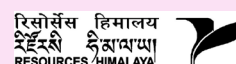




Image 1. Female Nepal Argus *Paralasa nepalica*, Humla, Nepal, 27 July 2017.



Image 2. Talung Valley, Humla, Nepal, where Nepal Argus *Paralasa nepalica* was photographed on 27 July 2017.

to prefer pine forest belt (Vis & Coene 1987), however, the observation presented in this paper is very different as the habitat is characterized by a wide valley interspersed by big boulders and rocky hills with steep trails that are mostly covered with lichens, grasses, forbs, sedges, and shrubs. The anomaly in the observation calls for further research to better understand the habitat and ecology of the species.

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