While surveying insects on the outskirts of Bhimashankar Wildlife Sanctuary near Dimbhe Dam (19°5'23"N & 73°44'31"E at 662m) on 14 April 2012, our attention was caught by a group of three butterflies hovering over Lantana flowers near a stream with their slow and floating flight. One of them was collected using an insect net and preserved (Image 1). It was identified as a Malabar Tree Nymph *Idea malabarica* (Moore) on the basis of literature, especially Evans (1932), Wynter-Blyth (1957), Kunte (2000) and Kehimkar (2008).

**Family:** Nymphalidae  
**Subfamily:** Danainae  
**Idea malabarica** (Moore) 1877

Material examined: 1 ex, 14.iv.2012, near bridge on road to Dimbhe Dam, Pune District, Maharashtra, coll. Manoj Jadhav (Z.S.I. W.R.C., Pune, Registration No. Ent.02/1110).

Wing span: 112 mm. *Idea malabarica* (Moore) is reported as confined to wet evergreen forests with heavy rainfall areas south of Goa to southern Western Ghats up to Kerala and is endemic to this area (Evans 1932; Wynter-Blyth 1957; Larsen, 1987; Kunte 2000; Rangnekar 2007; Kehimkar 2008; Sharma & Borkar 2008). Largest among milkweed butterflies, unmistakable due to its slowest flight among Indian butterflies, prefers wetter forests between 300–1200 m in the hills (Wynter-Blyth 1957).

Barring a single record of Ghosh et al. (1990) from Raigarh District as a new report for Maharashtra State, no further records of *Idea malabarica* from any of the districts.
Range extension of Malabar Tree Nymph

Jadhav & Sharma

Table 1. Indicating state wise distributional records of *Idea malabarica* Moore

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sno</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Locality</th>
<th>Latitude</th>
<th>Longitude</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>Poladpur, Raigarh</td>
<td>17.985°N</td>
<td>73.466°E</td>
<td>Ghosh et al. (1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Dimbhe, Pune Dist.</td>
<td>19.089°N</td>
<td>73.743°E</td>
<td>Present record</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Selichandhai, Madurai</td>
<td>9.724°N</td>
<td>77.806°E</td>
<td>Alagumurugan et al. (2011)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Butterflies have specific habitat requirements depending upon their feeding and reproduction needs (larval host plants). Earlier, *Idea malabarica* was considered a monophagous species feeding on *Aganosoma cymosa* (Apocynaceae) but Susanth (2005) reported *Parsonia spiralis* (Apocynaceae) as its new larval host plant. Nevertheless, it is not yet known out of two known host plants, which one is being used by the butterfly to survive in this area. However, it can be said with certainty that the sacred groves in the vicinity must include both host plants.

The record of *Idea malabarica* from Dimbhe, Pune District of northern Western Ghats, Maharashtra extends its known range significantly northwards from Raigarh (about 275km) and southern Western Ghats or Goa (about 530km). A distribution map (Image 2, Table 1) for *Idea malabarica* in Western Ghats is provided based on the published records (Ghosh & Chaudhary 1986; Ghosh et al. 1990; Radhakrishnan 2000; Sreekumar & Balakrishnan 2001; Arun 2003; Arun & Azeez 2003; Palot & Abdurahman 2003; Borkar & Komarpant 2004; Ali et al. 2004; Dunston & Raj 2005; Radhakrishnan & Palot 2007; Rangnekar 2007; Kunte 2008; Alagumurugan et al. 2011).

The occurrence of Malabar Tree Nymph, an endemic butterfly of southern Western Ghats in the new geographical area is interesting to study: the factors which made the species extend its range to a considerable degree; to explore whether the butterfly is using other species of Apocynaceae as food plant in the study area and finding new areas conducive for its survival.

REFERENCES


Kunte, K. (2000). *Butterflies of Peninsular India*. University Press (Hyderabad) and Indian Academy of Science (Bangalore), xxiii+254pp.


