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## NOTE

### NEW NYMPHALID BUTTERFLY RECORDS FROM JAMMU & KASHMIR, INDIA

Shakha Sharma & Neeraj Sharma

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India is home to 461 species of butterflies belonging to the largest family Nymphalidae (Varshney & Smetacek 2015; Kehimkar 2016). A number of reports on the range extension of butterfly species are consistently pouring in from the states of Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and Punjab of the northwestern Himalaya, but the information on the distribution and range extension of butterflies in the northern Himalayan state of Jammu & Kashmir is scanty and equivocal. The Jammu region of Jammu & Kashmir offers a wide range of habitats from the alluvial plains of the Ravi and Chenab in the south to the moderately elevated Shiwaliks, Pir-Panjal, and Great Himalaya northwards, bordering Kashmir in the north and Ladakh in the northeast. While a good account of butterfly fauna is available for Kashmir (Home 1938; Mani & Singh 1962; Das et al. 1964; Das & Verma 1965; Qureshi et al. 2014) and Ladakh (Meinertzhagan 1927; Tshikolovets 2005; Sidhu et al. 2012; Sondhi et al. 2017), only a few records are available from the Jammu region (Sharma & Sharma 2017a,b, 2018). During the surveys conducted in the Jammu Shiwaliks, Sharma & Sharma (2017a) reported three new nymphalid butterfly species for the state and these included *Polyura agraria*, *Athyma perius* and *Lethe europa*.

Targeting a wide area, the butterfly surveys were conducted in different landscapes across sub-tropical and temperate climatic regimes, viz., Kalidhar and Dalhori forests, Rajouri District (west), Mansar-Surinsar-

**NEW NYMPHALID BUTTERFLY RECORDS FROM JAMMU & KASHMIR, INDIA**

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Manwal Range, Jammu, Samba, and Udhampur districts (south), Billawar-Basoholi-Bani, Kathua District (east), Batote-Bhaderwah, Ramban and Doda districts (north), and Paddar in Kishtwar District (far northeast) in an elevation range of 320–3,200 m (Fig. 1) from June 2016 to June 2018. During the explorations, we sighted five nymphalid butterfly species previously not reported from the state of Jammu & Kashmir. The species were photographed in the field and the geo-coordinates were recorded. The species were identified by consulting the available literature, viz., keys (Evans 1927, 1932), catalogue (Varshney & Smetacek 2015), field guides and books (Varshney 1983, 1993; Kunte 2006; Pajni et al. 2006; Singh 2010; Kehimkar 2014, 2016; Smetacek 2016; Sondhi & Kunte 2018), annotated checklist (van Gasse 2017), and online resources (Anonymous 2018a,b; Choker et al. 2018; Karmakar & Sarkar 2018; Kunte et al. 2018).

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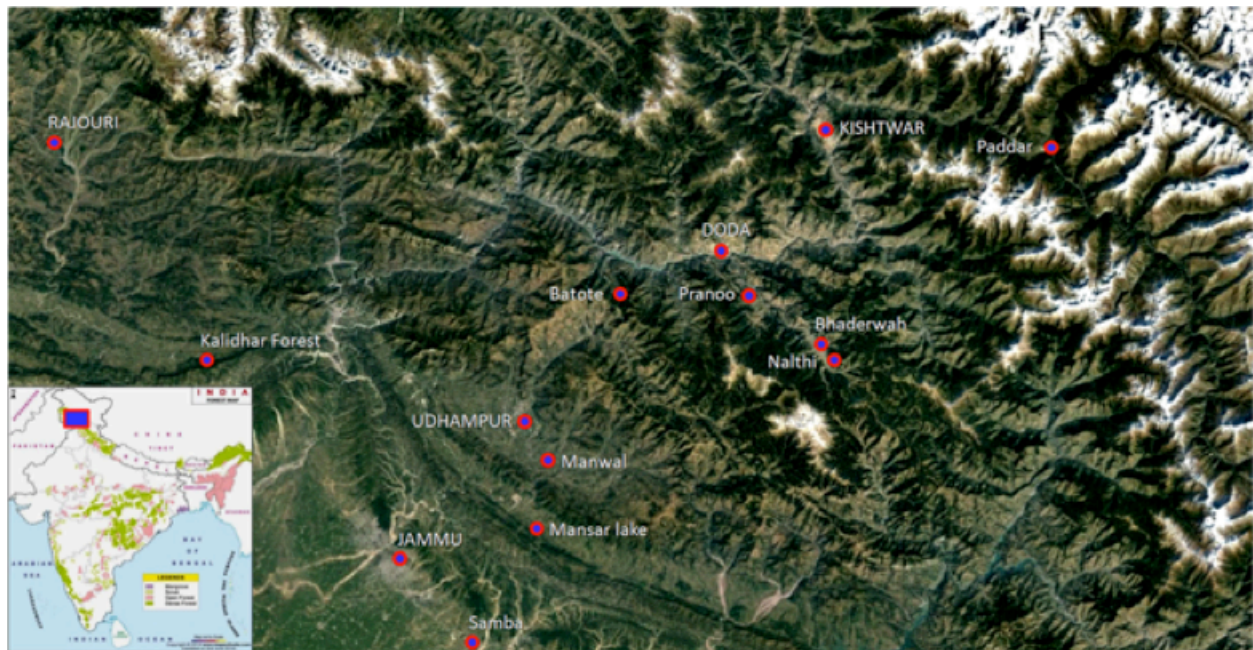


Figure 1. Map of the study area showing locations of butterfly records

### Heliconiinae

#### *Vagrans egista* Kollar (Vagrant)

Current known distribution until this study: India (Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand to Arunachal Pradesh, West Bengal, and Odisha), Nepal, Bhutan, and Myanmar (van Gasse 2017; Kehimkar 2014, 2016; Varshney & Smetacek 2015; Anonymous 2018a).

Remarks: Three individuals were spotted nectaring on the water pepper plant *Polygonum hydropiper* L. along the banks of lake Mansar (32.693°N & 75.149°E, c. 665m), Samba District, on 22 October 2017. Five individuals were noted mud-puddling on the moist sandy bed of a seasonal stream near Manwal (32.801°E & 75.140°E, c. 575m) in Udhampur District on 28 October 2017 (Image 1). Three individuals were again sighted on the same day in an adjacent stream. The species, though widely distributed across the Himalaya with its known western distribution up to Himachal Pradesh (Kirti et al. 2016; Anonymous 2018a), was recorded for the first time from the state of Jammu & Kashmir.

#### *Acraea issoria issoria* Hubner (Himalayan Yellow Coster)

Current known distribution until this study: India (Himachal Pradesh to Arunachal Pradesh), Nepal, Bhutan, and Myanmar (van Gasse 2017; Kehimkar 2014, 2016; Varshney & Smetacek 2015; Sondhi & Kunte 2018; Kunte et al. 2018).

Remarks: On the sunny evening of 04 June 2018, an individual of Himalayan Yellow Coster was spotted



Image 1 Vagrant *Vagrans egista*

basking over a leaf of *Debregeasia hypoleuca* Gaudich (Image 2a) along a perennial stream near Batote (33.110°N & 75.340°E, c. 1,390m) on the Jammu-Kishtwar State Highway. On scanning the area further up along the stream, we noticed sluggish swarms of Himalayan Yellow Coster butterflies hovering and intermittently sitting over *Debregeasia hypoleuca* Gaudich and *Girardinia palmata* Blume shrubs. Two days later, on 06 June 2018, a few pairs were observed mating (Image 2b) while a few others were spotted laying eggs. On 19 June 2018, we visited the spot again and observed the ventral surface of *D. hypoleuca* Gaudich leaves loaded with eggs along with a few freshly emerged caterpillars (Image

2c). The species has its established distribution across the Himalayas from Arunachal Pradesh in the east up to Solan District of Himachal Pradesh in the far west (Kunte et al. 2018) until this reporting, thus confirming it as an addition to the butterfly fauna of Jammu & Kashmir.

### Limenitinae

#### *Auzakia danava* Moore (Indian Commodore)

Current known distribution until this study: India (Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand to Arunachal Pradesh, northern hills of West Bengal), Nepal, Bhutan, and Myanmar (van Gasse 2017; Kehimkar 2014, 2016; Varshney & Smetacek 2015; Anonymous 2018b; Sondhi & Kunte 2018).

Remarks: On the bright sunny afternoon of 23 October 2017, a female individual (Image 3a) was seen hovering over a gregarious *Mentha longifolia* L. growth near marshy slopes of Pranoo (32.113°N & 75.575°E, c. 1,020m), Bhaderwah. A male individual was spotted perched on a rocky boulder near Nalthi (32.937°N & 75.712°E, c. 2025m), Bhaderwah, on 18 May 2018 (Image 3b). The species has a widespread distribution across the Himalayas, with its western extent reported up to Bandli Wildlife Sanctuary, Mandi District, Himachal Pradesh (Anonymous 2018b). This is the first sighting of the species from this part of the northwestern Himalayas and thus is a new record for the state of Jammu & Kashmir.

### Cyrestinae

#### *Pseudergolis wedah* Kollar (Himalayan Tabby)

Current known distribution until this study: India (Himachal Pradesh to Uttarakhand, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh), Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Myanmar (van Gasse 2017; Kehimkar 2014, 2016; Varshney & Smetacek 2015; Karmakar & Sarkar 2018; Sondhi & Kunte 2018).

Remarks: An individual was seen basking over a sandstone along a small rivulet near Dalhori (32.299°N & 74.453°E, c. 1125m), Rajouri, on 21 July 2017. A group of five individuals was again sighted in a dumpy vegetated location near Kalidhar (33.050°N & 74.646°E, c. 810m), Jammu District, on 20 October 2017 (Image 4). On the same day two individuals were again spotted basking over the leaves of *Ficus auriculata* Lour, two others sitting on dung, and one observed in continuous low flight. Taslima Sheikh also recorded the species from Chenani (33.041°N & 75.279°E, c. 1,185m), Udhampur District, on 14 August 2017. Karmakar & Sarkar (2018) have reported the westernmost extent of the species up to Mcleodganj in Kangra District, Himachal Pradesh, and this could be a possible missed record or a range



Image 2 a. Himalayan Yellow Coster *Acraea issoria issoria* (male)



Image 2b. Himalayan Yellow Coster *Acraea issoria issoria* (mating pair)



Image 2c. Himalayan Yellow Coster *Acraea issoria issoria* (eggs and caterpillars)



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a



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b

Image 3 a,b. Indian Commodore *Auzakia danava* (female and male)

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Image 4. Himalayan Tabby *Pseudergolis wedah*

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a



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b

Images 5a,b. Common Jester *Symbrenthia lilaea* (wings closed and open)

extension of the species and thus is a new addition to the butterfly fauna of Jammu & Kashmir State.

### Nymphalinae

#### *Symbrenthia lilaea* Hewitson (Common Jester)

Current known distribution until this study: India (Himachal Pradesh to Arunachal Pradesh, West Bengal, and Odisha), Nepal, Bhutan, and Myanmar (van Gasse 2017; Kehimkar 2014, 2016; Varshney & Smetacek 2015; Choker et al. 2018; Sondhi & Kunte, 2018).

Remarks: An individual was first spotted basking over the leaves of *Ficus auriculata* Lour along the Jammu-Poonch National Highway near Kalidhar (33.052°N & 74.633°E, c. 720m) on 18 October 2017. Two individuals were sighted on the sandy bed of a seasonal stream close to Kalidhar Temple on 20 October 2017 (Images 5 a,b). Another individual was recorded among a group of Vagrant *Vagrans egista*, Common Leopard *Phalanta phalantha*, Lemon Emigrant *Catopsilia pomona*, Danaid Eggfly *Hypolimnas misippus*, Common Punch *Dodona durga*, and Common Beak *Libythea lepita* along a seasonal stream near Manwal (32.801°E, 75.140°E, c. 575m), Udhampur District, on 28 October 2017. Taslima

Sheikh first recorded the species on 22 January 2016 (Choker et al., 2018) from Environmental Park, Jammu (32.729°N, 75.904°E, c. 475m). The species has so far been reported up to Daryar in Solan District of Himachal Pradesh (Choker et al. 2018) and thus is an addition to the butterfly fauna of Jammu & Kashmir State.

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