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NOTE

FIRST RECORD OF THE WHITE TUFTED ROYAL PRATAPA DEVA LILA MOORE, [1884] (LEPIDOPTERA: LYCAENIDAE: THECLINAE) FROM HIMACHAL PRADESH, EXTENDING ITS KNOWN RANGE WESTWARDS

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First record of the White Tufted Royal *Pratapa deva lila* Moore, [1884] (Lepidoptera: Lycaenidae: Theclinae) from Himachal Pradesh, extending its known range westwards

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The butterflies of Himachal Pradesh are quite well studied. The earliest publication of the butterflies from Himachal Pradesh was that of the Simla Hills. G.V.W. de Rhe-Philipe published a series of papers listing butterflies of the Simla Hills in 1931 (de Rhe-Philipe 1931). Subsequently, Wynter-Blyth added to the butterfly checklist of Simla through a series of publications between 1940 and 1947 (Wynter-Blyth 1941–1947). More recently, there have been numerous publications on butterflies from Himachal Pradesh by researchers and scientists.

The White Tufted Royal *Pratapa deva lila* Moore, [1884] is reported for the first time from Himachal Pradesh, during opportunistic surveys, extending its known range westwards.

Two subspecies of the lycaenid, White Tufted Royal *Pratapa deva* (Moore, [1858]) are known to occur in India. The nominate species *Pratapa deva deva* Moore, [1858] occurs in peninsular India and Sri Lanka while *Pratapa deva lila* Moore, [1888] was previously known to occur from Uttarakhand eastwards to Eastern Himalaya, northeastern India, Myanmar, and Thailand (Singh & Bhandari 2003; Varshney & Smetacek 2015; Kunte et al.

2018; Sondhi & Kunte 2018; Savelle 2018).

On 1 August 2017, during a visit to Dharamshala, Kangra District in Himachal Pradesh, I recorded a male White Tufted Royal *Pratapa deva lila* Moore, [1888] at 15.39h (Image 1; Image 2). The butterfly was observed between the Chinmaya Ashram and the Himachal Pradesh Vidhan Sabha at Sidhbari (32.1793901N & 76.3779831E), a suburb of Dharamshala, at an altitude of 1,400m. The butterfly had freshly emerged and was sitting on a bush, which was covered with the parasitic creeper, *Loranthus*. Members of the genus *Pratapa* are known to use plant species of the family Loranthaceae as their larval host plants and *Loranthus tomentosus* B. Heyne ex Roth is listed as one of its hosts from India (Robinson et al. 2010).

A review of older literature on Indian butterflies (Evans 1932; Wynter-Blyth 1957; Cantlie 1963) lists the Indian distribution of *Pratapa deva lila* Moore, [1888] as Uttarakhand eastwards to Eastern Himalaya. Wynter-Blyth (1957), however, mentions records of this species from the “Ambala plains” hence it has been recorded in the state of Haryana, too. Kehimkar (2016) mentions the distribution of this species as “Himachal-Arunachal,

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Image 1. Underside of male *Pratapa deva lila* Moore [1888], Sidhbari, Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh, India.



Image 2. Upperside of male *Pratapa deva lila* Moore, [1888] Sidhbari, Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh, India.



W. Bengal, NE" but without offering any corroboration or evidence to support its presence in Himachal Pradesh. Older publications specifically focused on Himachal Pradesh (Moore 1882; de Rhe-Philipe 1931; Ferrar 1934; Wynter-Blyth 1941–1947) including the elaborate listing from the Simla hills by de Rhe-Philipe and additional records by Wynter-Blyth do not list this species. More recent publications on Indian butterflies (Varshney & Smetacek 2015; Singh & Sondhi 2016; Sondhi & Kunte 2018) corroborate the distribution from Uttarakhand eastwards. An extensive perusal of recent butterfly literature from Himachal Pradesh (Kumar & Juneja 1977; Mehta et al. 2002; Thakur et al. 2002; Uniyal 2007; Singh 2008; Arora et al. 2009; Saini et al. 2009; Singh & Banyal 2013; Chandel et al. 2014; Sharma et al. 2015) reveals no records of this species from Himachal Pradesh. Moreover, there are no records of this species from Himachal Pradesh on the Butterflies of India website (Kunte et al. 2018) either.

Hence, this record of *Pratapa deva lila* Moore, [1888] from Dharamshala extends the range of this species westwards and it represents the westernmost record at the edge of its global distributional range. Henceforth, the Indian distribution of this subspecies should be listed as Himachal Pradesh (Dharamshala), Haryana (Ambala plains), Uttarakhand east to Eastern Himalaya and the hills of northeastern India.

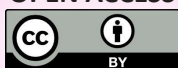
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