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Ph: +91 9385339863 | www.threatenedtaxa.org
Email: sanjay@threatenedtaxa.org

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continued on the back inside cover

Cover: A female Javan Leopard *Panthera pardus melas* in rehabilitation phase at Cikananga Wildlife Center. © Yayasan Cikananga Konservasi Terpadu.



Two new records of Lilac Silverline *Apharitis lilacinus* (Lepidoptera: Lycaenidae) from northeastern India

Monsoon Jyoti Gogoi¹ , Ngulkhohal Khongsai² , Biswajit Chakdar³ & Girish Jathar⁴

^{1–3} Bombay Natural History Society, Mumbai, Maharashtra 400001, India.

⁴ Srushti Conservation Foundation, 104, Hissa 8, Soba Garden Saffron, C Pune CIT Mahatma Society, Pune, Maharashtra 411038, India.

¹ monsoonjyoti@gmail.com (corresponding author), ² n.khongsai@bnhs.org, ³ b.chakdar@bnhs.org, ⁴ girishjathar@gmail.com

Abstract: Lilac Silverline *Apharitis lilacinus* is a butterfly native to southern, northeastern, & northern India and northern Myanmar. In northeastern India it was known from a single record: H. Stevens from N. Lakhimpur, Assam in 1925. Four individuals were photographed on 15 May 2018 in D'ering Wildlife Sanctuary, Arunachal Pradesh, which is the first record of the species after more than 90 years in northeastern India and the first record from Arunachal Pradesh. The species was again recorded on 22 June 2020 from Dibru-Saikhowa National Park, Assam. The aerial distance between both records was 36.5 km. This species is legally protected under Schedule II, Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

Keywords: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, butterfly, distribution, new record.

Apharitis ranges from southwestern Sahara (Afrotropical) to the northeastern Himalaya (Indo-Malayan). There are 11 species in total with three reported in India. *Apharitis* was previously placed under *Cigaritis* and *Spindasis*. It is different from *Aphnaeus* in having 11 veins instead of 12 (unlike *Cigaritis* and *Spindasis*). Lobe to hindwing not very marked in *Apharitis*, whereas in *Cigaritis* there is no lobe to hindwing, and lobe well developed in *Spindasis*. The species of this genus can be separated readily from *Cigaritis* by the shape of the wing, and from *Spindasis* by

the coloration (Riley 1925).

Lilac Silverline *Apharitis lilacinus* belongs to the blues butterfly family, measuring 32–36 mm. This group is called Silverline because brilliant and faded silver lines run through the red bands of the butterfly. The species is endemic to India and Myanmar. In northeastern India, the species was previously known from North Lakhimpur, Assam based on a single record by H. Stevens (Riley 1925) which is the only record of the species in northeastern India. On 15 May 2018, one male and three females were photographed from D'ering Wildlife Sanctuary, Arunachal Pradesh (27.925N, 95.435E) (Image 1, 2). Two years later, another female was recorded from Dibru Saikhowa National Park, located at Tinsukia & Dibrugarh district of Assam (27.606N, 95.361E) on 22 June 2020 (Image 3, 4). The aerial distance between the two records is 36.5 km. The specimens from northeastern India appear to have darker pigmentation than those from southern India.

The habitat of *A. lilacinus* is medium height mostly *Imperata cylindrica* in D'ering Wildlife Sanctuary, Arunachal Pradesh and *Vivtiveria* sp., *Saccharum spontaneum* in Dibru-Saikhowa National Park, Assam

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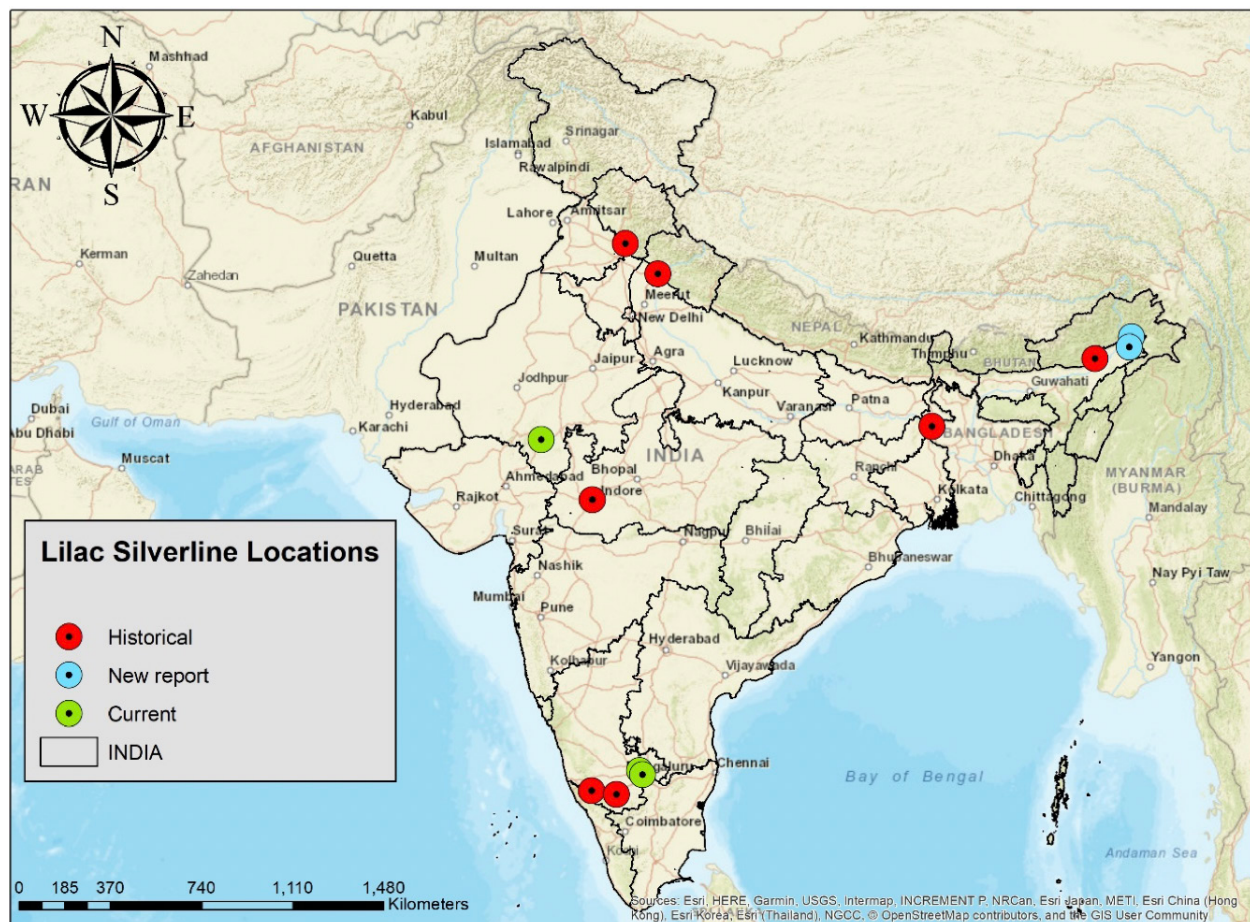


Figure 1. Map showing distribution of Lilac Silverline *Apharitis lilacinus* in India

whereas the other *Spindasis* sp. in northeastern India, prefer woodland/forest habitats. The species is possibly not rare in a few localities of D'Ering Wildlife Sanctuary and Dibru-Saikhowa National Park. British North Lakhimpur covers the present Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Dhemaji and Tinsukia district, so the exact record of the species by H. Stevens could not be ascertained and it could be within Dibru Saikhowa National Park. This species is legally protected under Schedule II, Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

The species is presently known to occur from Hessarghata Lake, Bengaluru, where it was photographed for first time in 2012 (<https://www.ifoundbutterflies.org/sp/2125/Apharitis-lilacinus>). It was also reported from Agastya Campus, Andhra Pradesh (unpublished data) & Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary, Rajasthan (Sundar et al. 2020) (Figure 1), however the paper wrongly mentions the record from North Lakhimpur as Uttar Pradesh instead of Assam. Other than these, there are no present known record of the species in India.

Historically, the species was known to occur in Mhow, Madhya Pradesh after it was described in 1884 (Swinhoe 1887); Malda, West Bengal (de Nicéville 1890). Also known from Mysore, Karnataka; Kasaul, Himachal Pradesh; Hardwar, Uttarkhand, (N Lakhimpur) Assam (Riley 1925) and from Coorg, Karnataka (Yates 1931). The species is known from Assam based on lone record of the butterfly in North Lakhimpur by H Stevens (Riley 1925; Evans 1932), the only record of the species in northeastern India (Figure 1).

The species is also known to occur in Myanmar and possibly in northern Thailand (De Abera 1986), however no recent record is available from either of these countries. Also, there is no specific locality of the species mentioned by De Abera 1986 in northern Thailand (Ek-Amnuay 2012). Hence, the species occurring in northern Thailand is doubtful.

Although the species is historically known from many locations in India, the record from North Lakhimpur, Assam (Riley 1925) is the lone record of the species in northeastern India. Our records from



Image 1. Lilac Silverline *Aphantis lilacinus* male in D'ering Wildlife Sanctuary, Arunachal Pradesh, 15 May 2018.



Image 2. Lilac Silverline *Aphantis lilacinus* female in D'ering Wildlife Sanctuary, Arunachal Pradesh, 15 May 2018.



Image 3. Lilac Silverline *Aphantis lilacinus* female in Dibru Saikhowa National Park, Assam, 22 June 2020.



Image 4. Lilac Silverline *Aphantis lilacinus* female in Dibru Saikhowa National Park, Assam, 22 June 2020.

D'ering Wildlife Sanctuary, Arunachal Pradesh in May, 2018 and Dibru-Saikhowa National Park, Assam in June, 2020 confirms the existence of the species in northeastern India and first record of the species after more than 90 years in the region. The record of the species from D'ering Wildlife Sanctuary, Arunachal Pradesh is also the first record of the species from Arunachal Pradesh and the record of the species from Dibru-Saikhowa National Park of Assam is the second record of the species from Assam since the record of H. Stevens from North Lakhimpur (Riley 1925). On both the occasions, the species was recorded in grassland habitats of D'ering Wildlife Sanctuary and Dibru-Saikhowa National Park respectively, which emphasis the importance of grassland habitat in Brahmaputra

floodplains for butterflies and other invertebrates. The species was not recorded in the unprotected grassland habitat in Brahmaputra floodplain lying adjacent to D'ering Wildlife Sanctuary or Dibru-Saikhowa National Park, suggesting that the species might not occur in non-protected grasslands and the butterfly probably prefer medium height grasses with no cattle grazing in protected areas of Brahmaputra floodplains.

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No. 12, Thiruvannamalai Nagar, Saravanampatti - Kalapatti Road,
Saravanampatti, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu 641035, India
ravi@threatenedtaxa.org

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Articles

The Javan Leopard *Panthera pardus melas* (Cuvier, 1809) (Mammalia: Carnivora: Felidae) in West Java, Indonesia: estimating population density and occupancy

– Anton Ario, Senjaya Mercusiana, Ayi Rustiadi, Robi Gumilang, I Gede Gelgel Darma Putra Wirawan & Toni Ahmad Slamet, Pp. 21331–21346

Breeding phenology and population dynamics of the endangered Forest Spiny Reed Frog *Afrixalus sylvaticus* Schiøtz, 1974 in Shimba Hills, Kenya

– Alfayo Koskei, George Eshiamwata, Bernard Kirui & Phylus K. Cheruiyot, Pp. 21347–21355

Ichthyofaunal diversity of Senkhi stream, Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh: a comparative status between 2004–05 and 2018–19

– Koj Taro, Lakpa Tamang & D.N. Das, Pp. 21356–21367

First record of *Proceratium* Roger, 1863, *Zasphinctus* Wheeler, 1918, and *Vollenhovia* Mayr, 1865 (Hymenoptera: Formicidae) from the Western Ghats of peninsular India, description of three new species, and implications for Indian biogeography

– Kalesh Sadasivan & Manoj Kripakaran, Pp. 21368–21387

Communications

New queen? Evidence of a long-living Jaguar *Panthera onca* (Mammalia: Carnivora: Felidae) in Tikal National Park, Guatemala

– Carlos A. Gaitán, Manolo J. García, M. André Sandoval-Lemus, Vivian R. González-Castillo, Gerber D. Guzmán-Flores & Cristel M. Pineda, Pp. 21388–21395

First camera trap record of Striped Hyena *Hyaena hyaena* (Linnaeus, 1758) (Mammalia: Carnivora: Hyaenidae) in Parsa National Park, Nepal

– Pramod Raj Regmi, Madhu Chetri, Haribhadra Acharya, Prakash Sigdel, Dipendra Adhikari, Naresh Subedi & Babu Ram Lamichhane, Pp. 21396–21401

Range extension and new ecoregion records of the Crocodile Monitor *Varanus salvadorii* (Peters & Doria, 1878) (Reptilia: Varanidae) in Papua New Guinea

– Borja Reh & Jim Thomas, Pp. 21402–21408

A checklist of fish and shellfishes of the Poonthura estuary, southwestern coast of India

– Kiranya Bella, Pramila Sahadevan, Giri Bhavan Sreekanth & Rajeev Raghavan, Pp. 21409–21420

A new species of *Protosticta* Selys, 1885 (Odonata: Zygoptera: Platystictidae) from Western Ghats, India

– Kalesh Sadasivan, Vinayan P. Nair & K. Abraham Samuel, Pp. 21421–21431

A case study on utilization and conservation of threatened plants in Sechu Tuan Nalla Wildlife Sanctuary, western Himalaya, India

– Puneet Kumar, Harminder Singh & Sushil Kumar Singh, Pp. 21432–21441

A survey of ethno-medicinally important tree species in Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary, central India

– Tinku Kumar, Akash Kumar, Amit Jugnu Bishwas & Pramod Kumar Khare, Pp. 21442–21448

Short Communications

Effects of a Bengal Slow Loris *Nycticebus bengalensis* (Primates: Lorisidae) bite: a case study from Murlen National Park, Mizoram, India

– Amit Kumar Bal, Anthony J. Giordano & Sushanto Gouda, Pp. 21449–21452

First record of *Garra birostris* Nebeshwar & Vishwanath, 2013 (Cypriniformes: Cyprinidae) from Doyang and Dikhu rivers of Brahmaputra drainage, Nagaland, India

– Sophiya Ezung, Metevinu Kechu & Pranay Punj Pankaj, Pp. 21453–21457

Two new records of Lilac Silverline *Apharitis lilacinus* (Lepidoptera: Lycaenidae) from northeastern India

– Monsoon Jyoti Gogoi, Ngulcholal Khongsai, Biswajit Chakdar & Girish Jathar, Pp. 21458–21461

Illustrated description of the mantis *Mesopteryx platycephala* (Mantodea: Mantidae) collected from West Bengal, India

– Gauri Sathaye, Sachin Ranade & Hemant Ghate, Pp. 21462–21466

***Cetrelia isidiata* (Asahina) W.L. Culb. & C.F. Culb. (Parmeliaceae) – an addition to the Indian lichen biota**

– Gaurav K. Mishra, Pooja Maurya & Dalip K. Upreti, Pp. 21467–21469

Notes

A new southern distribution record for Pacific Marten *Martes caurina*

– Maximilian L. Allen, Brianne Kenny, Benjamin Crawford & Morgan J. Farmer, Pp. 21470–21472

First Asian record of Light-mantled Albatross *Phoebastria palpebrata* (Foster, 1785) from Rameswaram Island, Tamil Nadu, India

– H. Byju & N. Raveendran, Pp. 21473–21475

***Salvia misella* Kunth (Lamiaceae) - a new record for Eastern Ghats of India**

– Prabhat Kumar Das, Pradeep Kumar Kamila & Pratap Chandra Panda, Pp. 21576–21579

***Salsola oppositifolia* Desf. in Great Rann of Kachchh, Gujarat – a new record for India**

– Rakesh Gujar, Vinesh Gamit, Ketan Tatu & R.K. Sugoor, Pp. 21580–21483

Extended distribution of *Impatiens scapiflora* (Balsaminaceae) to the flora of Eastern Ghats, India

– T.S. Saravanan, S. Kaliamoorthy, M.Y. Kamble & M.U. Sharief, Pp. 21484–21486

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