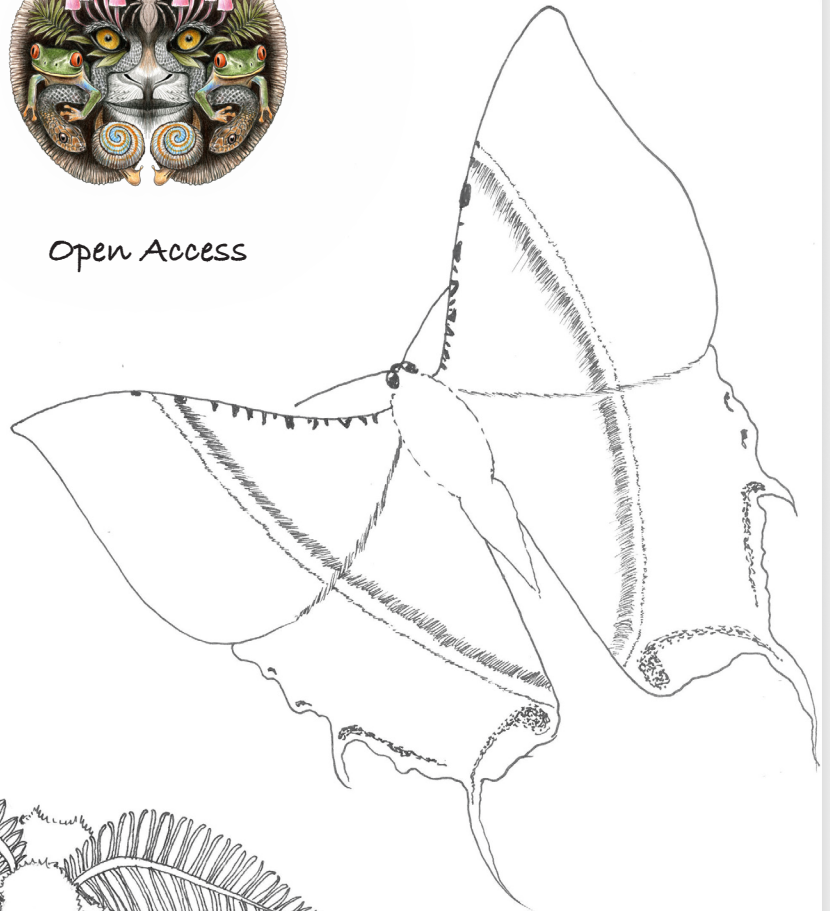
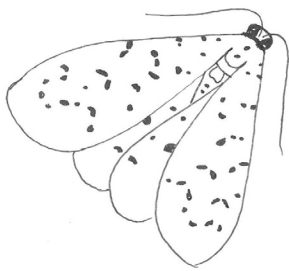


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continued on the back inside cover

Cover: Celebrating the unsung heroes—moths, our nocturnal pollinators. © Priyanka Iyer.



NOTE

First photographic record of White Royal *Tajuria illurgis illurgis* (Hewitson, [1869]) (Insecta: Lepidoptera: Lycaenidae) from Arunachal Pradesh, India

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The genus *Tajuria* Moore, [1881] is an Indo-Malayan genus of Blues (Lycaenidae), popularly known as Royal butterflies and comprises of around 50 species across the Oriental tropics (Schröder 2006). India has around 15 species of *Tajuria* so far (Varshney & Smetacek 2015) and out of these, the White Royal *Tajuria illurgis* (Hewitson, 1869), is a rare butterfly (Van Gasse 2021) with no photographic record from Arunachal Pradesh. It was described by Hewitson from Darjeeling, and is also legally protected in India under Schedule II of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 (Anonymous 2023). *T. illurgis* (Hewitson, 1869) comprises two subspecies namely, *illurgis*, which has been previously reported from Bhutan, Assam (Basistha et al. 1999), Nepal (Sajan & Sapkota 2022; Van der Poel & Smetacek 2022), northern Thailand (Ek-Amnuay 2012), Laos (Osada et al. 1999), Vietnam (Monastyrskii & Devyatkin 2015), and *tattaka* (Araki, 1949) confined to Taiwan island. Although, Kehimkar (2008) reports its distribution from Uttarakhand to Arunachal Pradesh, Nepal, Bhutan, and Myanmar and it occurs further up to northern Thailand, Laos, Vietnam. Till date, there is no recent photographic

evidence of the species from Arunachal Pradesh or any other part of eastern Himalaya in India.

During our field survey in and around Vijaynagar and also inside the forest patches situated behind the small village of Buddhamandir (27.2130°N, 96.9992°E), circle Vijaynagar of Changlang district, Arunachal Pradesh, on 25 August 2022 at 1130h RL photographed a single individual of *Tajuria illurgis illurgis* (Hewitson, [1869]) (Image1) at an elevation of 1,344 m. The butterfly was spotted perching on a leaf of *Strobilanthes* sp. belonging to the family Acanthaceae, at a height of about 1.5 m above the ground in shady forest patches, and was observed resting for 7–10 min. No additional observation has been made in the area after repeated survey in subsequent months, which suggest that the species is either rare or highly seasonal at the particular elevation of Vijaynagar. The species is generally known to fly between 1,430–2,200 m across its ranges, and in Nepal it is recently recorded between 1,750–1,860 m (Sajan & Sapkota 2022) and since we recorded the species during August at much lower elevation (1,344 m), it's very likely that the species generally flies lot

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Image 1. White Royal *Tajuria illurgis illurgis* (Hewitson, [1869]).

higher elevation during summer at Vijaynagar area. The photograph of the species was identified and confirmed following (Kehimkar 2008; Ek-Amnuay 2012).

The previous detailed studies on the taxonomy of butterflies from Arunachal Pradesh (Bhattachacharya 1985; Gogoi 2012; Sethy et al. 2014; Durairaj & Sinha 2015; Singh 2015; Kehimkar 2016; Sondhi & Kunte 2016; Sharma & Goswami 2021) revealed no published records of *Tajuria illurgis illurgis* (Hewitson, [1869]) from the state of Arunachal Pradesh. Therefore, this is the first photographic evidence of *Tajuria illurgis illurgis* (Hewitson, [1869]), White Royal from Arunachal Pradesh. The presence of *T. illurgis* in Arunachal Pradesh was not unexpected as it is historically known to occur all throughout Himalayan ranges from Uttarakhand-Bhutan-Myanmar (Van Gasse 2021). The encounter of this species which has received India's highest level of legal protection, Vijaynagar shows that more scientific exploration needs to be carried out from the area, and being in the extreme boundary of Indo-Myanmar, newer Lepidopteran findings can come up in future.

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