

INSECTS FROM THE *CALOTROPIS GIGANTEA* PLANT IN AND AROUND COASTAL ZONE OF WEST BENGAL

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Calotropis gigantea (L.) W.T. Aiton is commonly known as "milkweed", a native plant of India, grows wild up to 900m throughout the country, on a variety of soils and in different climates, sometimes where nothing else grows. It has been reported that this plant can be used in toothache and earache, sprain, anxiety, pain, epilepsy and in mental disorder. Sikdar et al. (2015) stated that the latex, root and bark of this plant is very harmful for eyes.

Studies on insect association and their role on *Calotropis gigantea* from Assam were made by Saikia et al (2015). However, nothing has been reported on the insect faunal association with this plant species from West Bengal and the coastal belt in particular. Thus, an attempt has been made to identify the insect faunal diversity of this plant species in and around coastal belt of West Bengal.

Coastal zone is the area of interaction between land and sea. West Bengal has a substantially long coastline of almost

325 kilometres (including islands) characterized by high floral and faunal biodiversity, diverse geomorphic features and anthropogenic intrusions (Bhattacharya, 2001; Bhattacharya et al., 2003). The West Bengal coast lies in between 21° 38' N to 22° 18' N and 87° 37' E to 89° 8' E along the coast of Bay of Bengal. It is spread over in Purba Medinipur, South 24-Parganas and North 24-Paraganas districts lying on either side of the funnel shaped Hooghly estuary. The coastal belt of Medinipur district represents 27% of West Bengal of coastal tract (60 km) extending along the west bank of Hooghly estuary from New Digha and then curving around Junput, Dadanpatrabar, Khejuri and Haldia on the east to the further north east up to Tamluk or even on the bank of Rupnarayan river (Mandal et al., 2013).

Several surveys have been conducted during 2015-2016 in Tajpur (21°38'51.490¹¹ N, 87°37' 19.111¹¹ E), Contai (21°46' 38.7¹¹ N, 87°44.56.1' E), Khejuri (21°52'26" N, 87°58'32" E), Heria (21°57'30¹¹ N, 87°48'10.586¹¹ E & 21°40' 53.3¹¹ N, 87°37'00.3¹¹ E), Kasaria (21°52'19" N, 87°55'56" E), Dakshin Kalagachia (21°48'39" N, 87°55'21" E) Nijkasba (21°47'37.41¹¹N, 87°53'35.63¹¹E), Tolla (21°57'44¹¹ N, 87°49'21¹¹ E) of Purba Medinipur and Gosaba (22°07'57.54¹¹ N, 88°49'32.52¹¹ E), Jharkahali (22°03' 33¹¹ N, 88°70.193' E), Bali (22°04'33¹¹ N, 88°42.193' E), Canning (22°18'37.10¹¹N, 88°39'28.37¹¹E,) and Gangasagar (21°51'57.06¹¹ N, 88°7'22.20¹¹ E) of South 24 Paraganas.

Present study reports 14 species belonging to 5 orders of insects from different parts of *Calotropis gigantea* in the coastal belt of West Bengal (Table 1). Of them, Hemiptera

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Table 1. List of insect species reported from *Calotropis gigantea*.

Species	Order	Family	Habitat
1 <i>Balta chopardi</i> Princis, 1969	Blattodea	Ectobiidae	Stem and under the leaves
2 Unidentified sp.	Coleoptera	Chrysomelidae	Flowers
3 <i>Platycorynus peregrinus</i> Herbst, 1783	Coleoptera	Chrysomelidae	Stem, nodes, petiole
4 <i>Coccinella transversalis</i> (Fabricius, 1781)	Coleoptera	Coccinellidae	Nodes, petiole, sometimes on leaves
5 <i>Paramecops farinosus</i> (Wiedemann, 1821)	Coleoptera	Curculionidae	On and under the leaves
6 <i>Parasarcophaga</i> sp.	Diptera	Sarcophagidae	On the leaves
7 <i>Clovia conifer</i> (Walker, 1851)	Hemiptera	Aphrophoridae	Nodes, petiole
8 <i>Cletus punctulatus</i> (Westwood, 1842)	Hemiptera	Coreidae	Under and above the leaves
9 <i>Spilostethus hospes</i> (Fabricius, 1794)	Hemiptera	Lygaeidae	Under and above the leaves
10 <i>Tropidothorax fimbriatus</i> (Dallas, 1852)	Hemiptera	Lygaeidae	Under and above the leaves
11 <i>Chrysocoris stolli</i> (Wolff, 1801)	Hemiptera	Scutelleridae	Under the leaves, above the leaf blade
12 <i>Eupterote hibisci</i> (Fabricius, 1775)	Lepidoptera	Eupterotidae	Flower and apical bud
13 <i>Parnara guttatus</i> (Bremer & Grey, (1852)	Lepidoptera	Hesperiidae	On flower
14 <i>Ariadne merione</i> (Crammer, 1777)	Lepidoptera	Nymphalidae	Flower and apical bud