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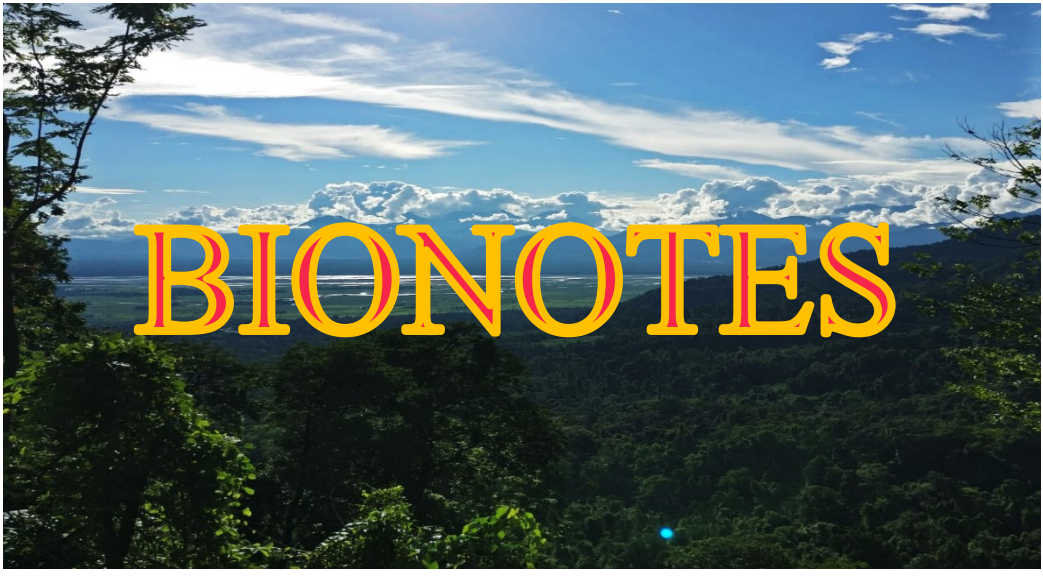

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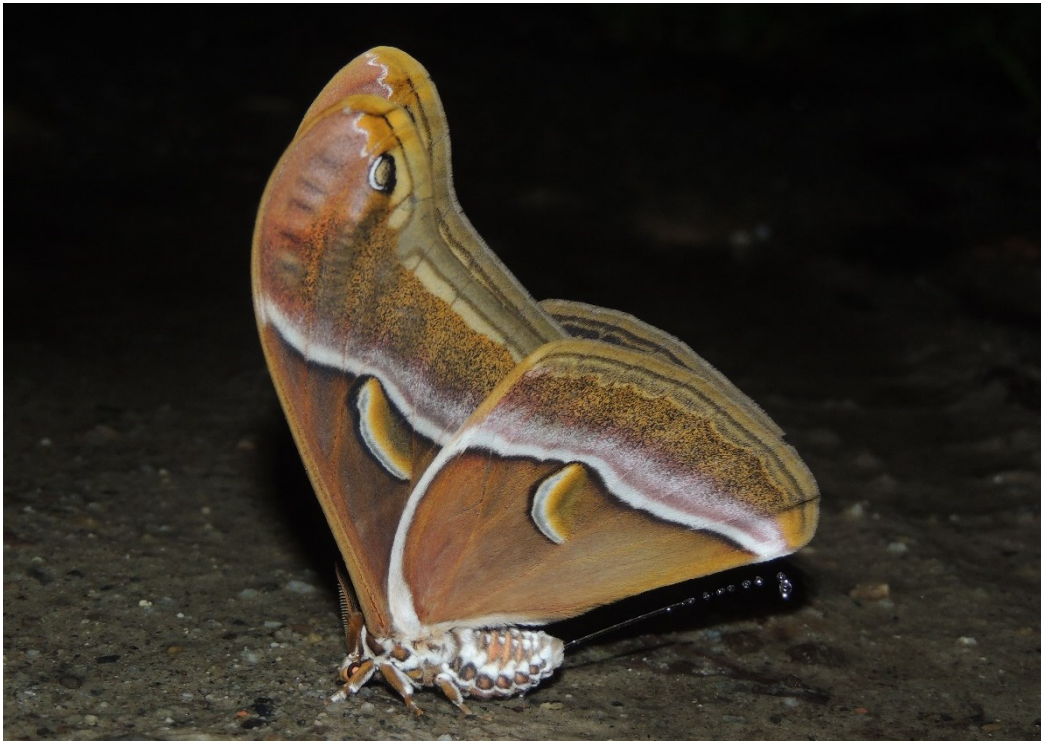

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Address for Correspondence
Butterfly Research Centre, Bhimtal, Uttarakhand 263 136, India. Phone: +91 8938896403.
Email: butterflyresearchcentre@gmail.com

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Cover Photo by Parixit Kafley of *Samia canningi* ejecting fluid from tip of abdomen.

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FOUR NEW BUTTERFLY SPECIES FOR NEPAL: *ABISARA CHELA*, *TAGIADES JAPETUS*, *LETHE DURA* & *LETHE DISTANS*

PIET VAN DER POEL[1], COLIN SMITH[2], MAHENDRA SINGH LIMBU[3] & SURENDRA PARIYAR[4]

*[*1]Noordwijkerhout, The Netherland*
pipoel@yahoo.com
[2]Pokhara, Nepal
[3]Godavari, Kathmandu, Nepal
[4]Annapurna Conservation Area Project, Pokhara, Nepal

Reviewer: Peter Smetacek

To record new species for science, a specimen and its description is necessary. However, new records of known species in a different locality or country can be based on photographic evidence showing the relevant characteristics. In 2015, Colin Smith drafted an article about three new species for Nepal, to which he added a fourth early in 2016. However, for reasons unknown, the article apparently never saw the light of day. One of the four species, *Celaenorrhinus nigricans* was reported for Nepal by Sajan KC and Pariyar (2019). The three remaining species and one additional new species for Nepal are presented in this article.

Abisara chela De Nicéville, 1886, Spot Judy ssp *A. c. chela* occurs in Sikkim, India (Varshney and Smetacek, 2015). This species is very similar to *Abisara neophron* (Hewitson, 1861) Tailed Judy, which has been known in Nepal since 1867 (Ramsay, v*ide pers. comm.* Colin Smith, 2017). *A. chela* has a costal white spot on the upper forewing at the end of the pale postdiscal band (Evans, 1932).

A. chela chela was photographed by Piet van der Poel on 2 Dec. 2015 at 1090m elevation near Birethante at the southern side of the Annapurna Conservation Area in the Gandaki area of Nepal. The following day at the same site *A. neophron* was photographed. Generally, the latter is observed in clearings in thick forest. These two observations were at a stream in an open area at some 80m from the nearest forest. *A. chela chela* was again observed by Piet van der Poel on 11 Dec. 2016 along a track in the forest above Lakeside Pokhara at 900m elevation and on 4 Mar. 2018 at a puddle near the forest edge at Rupa Lake at 635m. It was also photographed by Surendra Pariyar on 2 and 29 November 2018 near Chitre in the Annapurna Conservation Area in clearings in forest at 1550 and 1840m elevation. These observations are the highest and the most western observations (Parbat district, west of Pokhara-Kaski District) of the species till date. It was again observed in March 2020 by Surendra Pariyar at Rupa Lake and by Sajan KC in Lamjung at 490m.

Some specimens labelled "*Abisara neophron"* in the Annapurna Natural History Museum in Pokhara were inspected. No specimens of *A. chela* were found among them. Hence, it appears that *A. chela* in recent times extended its range into the greater Pokhara area (Kaski, Parbat and Lamjung Districts). It may have been in the area in between Sikkim and Pokhara for a longer period, but it was never reported, possibly due to the lack of surveys in many parts of Nepal. These observations extend the known range of *A. chela* by more than 400km.

Tagiades japetus (Stoll, [1781]), Common Snow Flat ssp *T. j. ravi* (Moore, [1866])

occurs from Uttarakhand to NE India and from Madhya Pradesh to West Bengal (Varshney and Smetacek, 2015). Consequently, it would be expected to occur in Nepal as well. It is very distinctive, having no white on the upper wings at all, except for an occasional white suffusion, and having clear spots on the forewings. It was listed by Colin Smith in his "Lepidoptera of Nepal" (2010). *T. japetus* was photographed by Colin Smith on 13 March 2010 near Dharan in Sunsari District of the Eastern Terai at about 100m elevation. It was seen in a shrubby area near a dried-up stream bed in thick forest. It was again photographed near Dharan in Sunsari district by Piet van der Poel on 27 March 2018 when it settled for 5 seconds near standing water in a small clearing in thick forest at 250m elevation.

The authors assume that *Tagiades japetus* is present throughout the Terai area of Nepal and that it has only been reported twice due to it being rather elusive.

Lethe dura (Marshall 1882), Scarce Lilacfork was until recently known on the Indian Subcontinent from Sikkim to NE India (Varshney and Smetacek, 2015). Early in 2020, it was reported for the first time from Uttarakhand (Singh and Singh, 2020). It is quite similar to *Lethe sura* (Doubleday [1849]), Lilacfork, but is distinguished by the inner edge of the under hind-wing discal band in spaces 4-6 being angled instead of straight, by the upper forewings being paler outwardly instead of mostly plain brown, and by the discal spots on the upper hindwings being smaller. *L. sura* has been known in Nepal since 1963 (Fujioka) and is fairly seldom seen, usually in or near broadleaved forest. *L. dura* was first photographed in Nepal by Mahendra Singh Limbu at Godavari at 1620m elevation on the 8th of June 2015. Two flying individuals were observed in the same area on the 16th of November 2015 at 1920m. It has been observed in the Godavari area fairly regularly since then. It was also photographed in 2016 in Ilam by Sanjaya Tamang and in November 2019 by Piet van der Poel in Ranibari Park Community Forest at 1320m, not far from the city centre of Kathmandu.

There appears to be some confusion about *Lethe sura* and *L. dura*. The coloured drawing in Doubleday (1949) to which the Funet website links *L. sura* and which is named "*Zophoessa sura"* appears to be what is nowadays called *L. dura.* Moreover, Funet gives as common name for *Lethe sura* "Scarce Lilacfork". Here, we follow the currently accepted species and common names for India (Varshney and Smetacek, 2015). The fact that nowadays *Lethe dura* is regularly observed may make one wonder if it was always there and recently increased in numbers or if it moved in recently.

Lethe distans Butler, 1870*,* Scarce Red Forester, *Lethe chandica* (Moore, [1858[) and *Lethe mekara* (Moore, [1858[), the Angled and Common Red Foresters, are more or less regularly encountered in Nepal. However, *Lethe distans,* the Scarce Red Forester, was never reported before. Varshney and Smetacek (2015) report it from Sikkim to N.E. India. The type locality is Darjeeling (Butler, 1870). It does not have any subspecies. A female of *Lethe sp* was photographed at the Tiger Mountain Resort near Pokhara at 1100m elevation by Hari Bhandari on 15 May 2018. Several people suspected it to be *Lethe distans* (Butler, 1870), the Scarce Red Forester. A second similar female was photographed at the Resort a few months later. Using available resources, including Evans (1932), it was tried to identify the butterfly. The space between the UnH ocellus in space 2 and the discal band was smaller than the width of the ocellus, indicating that it was most probably *Lethe mekara*. During this exercise, Piet van der Poel looked through his pictures of *Lethe chandica* and found one male that was not sharply angled and for which the distance between the ocelli in spaces 2-4 and the discal band was wider than the width of the ocelli for all three of the spaces, hence the Scarce Red Forester. It was photographed on 24 April 2016 on the roadside in a forested area at

1050m not far from the Tiger Mountain Resort. It is the most western observation of *L. distans* till now, a westwards extension of its known range by some 400km.

Lethe distans may have been in Nepal for a long time, and having no record since early 2016 indicates that it is probably very seldom seen, rather than it having extended its range recently.

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Fig.1: *Abisara chela*

Fig.2: *Tagiades japetus*

Fig.3: *Lethe distans*

Fig.4: *Lethe dura* ventral view

Fig.5: *Lethe dura* dorsal view

Fig.6: *Lethe dura* ventral