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EXTENSION OF THE KNOWN DISTRIBUTION OF THE DARK WANDERER (*PARERONIA CEYLANICA*) AND ORANGE-TAILED AWLET (*BIBASIS SENA*) BUTTERFLIES TO THE COROMANDEL COAST, INDIA

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Introduction

The Dark Wanderer (*Pareronia ceylanica ceylanica* C. & R. Felder, 1865) (Pieridae) and the Orange-tailed Awlet (*Bibasis sena sena* (Moore, [1866])) (Hesperiidae) are inhabitants of dense evergreen forests, the latter ascending to 1500m in the Himalaya. *P. ceylanica ceylanica* is known from southern India, from Goa to Kerala along the western face of the Western Ghats, and Sri Lanka (Wynter-Blyth, 1957). An isolated population, placed under *P. ceylanica naraka* (Moore, 1877), inhabits the Andaman Is. (Evans, 1932; Varshney & Smetacek, 2015).

Within India, the Orange-tailed Awlet is known from Maharashtra to Madhya Pradesh and south to Kerala, Himachal Pradesh to N.E. India; Andaman & Nicobar Is. (Varshney & Smetacek, 2015).

Observations

During an opportunistic survey of the butterflies of Auroville (79° 81'29" E & 12° 00'53" N), which lies in Villupuram district, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, near the eastern coast of southern India, the Dark Wanderer was recorded several times. It was observed at three locations in the current study, namely Revelation Forest (5 March, 2018),

Pitchandikulam Forest (23 December 2018) (both in Tamil Nadu) and Lantana plantations on the road from Puducherry towards Auroville (multiple sightings from October 2018 to February, 2019, Puducherry). The Orange-tailed Awlet, *B. sena* was also observed at Auroville in April 2018.

Discussion

According to the Evans (1932), *P. ceylanica* has two subspecies, of which *P.c. ceylanica* is known from Goa to Kerala (Varshney & Smetacek, 2015). The current records extend the known distribution of the species to the eastern coast of India and suggest that this narrow endemic might actually have a larger distribution than previously known. The forest type at the locations where it was observed is Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest. In this regard, Wynter-Blyth (1957) noted that “in S. India the Dark Wanderer is only found in thick jungle in regions where the rainfall is heavy, usually at the foot of the ghats and never above

3,000 feet. Here it is common all the year round. In Ceylon (Sri Lanka), however, it is common in the drier low country and is found to all heights during the flights.” Bhakare & Ogale (2018) note that it inhabits moist, dense forest at lower elevation. Therefore, Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest is a new habitat for the species in India. The fact that it was observed on many occasions at three different locations implies that the species is a resident in the area around Auroville and has a healthy population there.

The Orange Awlet is a widespread species, presumably capable of travelling long distances. The species was observed only once in the course of a year-long survey, on 12 April, 2018 at Pitchandikulam Forest, Auroville, which is a nursery for Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest trees and plants. The possibility that the specimen observed was a migrant cannot be ruled out.



Fig 1. *Pareronia ceylanica*



Fig 2. *Bibasis sena*

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RE-APPEARANCE OF THE RED BREAST JEZABEL *DELIAS ACALIS* (GODART, 1819) (LEPIDOPTERA: PIERIDAE) IN THE KUMAON HIMALAYA

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The Himalayan distribution of the Red Breast Jezabel *Delias acalis* (Godart, 1819) was clarified when Smetacek (2001) reported the species from Nainital district in the Kumaon Himalaya, Uttarakhand for the first time since regular records began there in 1947. Prior to this, Evans (1932) gave a distribution of Shimla (Himachal Pradesh) to Burma (Myanmar) for the species, although Wynter-Blyth (1957) questioned the Shimla record and gave a distribution of Nepal eastwards for the species.

Smetacek (2001), on the basis of specimens collected or observed between 1997 and 1999 in Nainital district, speculated that the species contracted and expanded its distribution along the base of the western Himalaya and had probably reached Shimla during the course of one such expansion. Smetacek (*pers. comm.*) did not record the species since its last report in 1999.

On 11 March, 2019, a male Red Breast Jezabel was observed on a flowering buddleia bush outside the Butterfly Research Centre (1500 m), Bhimtal in Nainital district, one of the sites where it had

previously been observed during the 1990s. On 22 March, two males visited the site and on 3 April 2019, a female visited the site. These were distinguishable because they had different parts of their wing missing, so it was clearly not a single specimen repeatedly visiting the site.

The present records were after a gap of 20 years. Although the first quarter of 2019 was notable for being unusually wet and cold, with snowfall on the surrounding hills as late as 28 February, it did not affect the quantity of butterflies in the spring brood, which, though emergence was late, were prolific.

Smetacek (2001) reported this species from Nainital district in the months of March, April, November and December. This suggests that there are at least two annual broods in the area during periods when this butterfly has colonised the area. In other parts of its range, there are three generations, the third being a monsoon brood observed by Bailey (1951) in Nepal.

It is interesting that Smetacek (2001) noted that this species has not been recorded in the western