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FIRST RECORD OF RED IMPERIAL BUTTERFLY *SUASA LISIDES* (INSECTA: LEPIDOPTERA: LYCAENIDAE) FROM TRIPURA, NORTH-EAST INDIA

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Abstract

Red Imperial butterfly *Suasa lisides* is reported for the first time from Tripura, North-eastern India.

Introduction

The Red Imperial butterfly *Suasa lisides* (Hewitson, 1863) (Lycaenidae) is a rare butterfly and legally protected in India under Schedule II of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. In the Indian subcontinent the butterfly has a patchy distribution and the species has so far been recorded from the states of Manipur, Meghalaya, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh (Varshney & Smetacek, 2015; Kehimkar, 2016).

The species has two tail-like outgrowths at the posterior margin of hind wings. Its distinguishing features include a wide reddish-brown band near the leading edge of under part of the fore wings and two dark spots near the leading edge of under part of white hind wings. The upper part of the fore wings is orange with dark brown or black borders (Evans, 1932; Kehimkar, 2016).

Observation

During a field study in the Unakoti Hills (24.3165 N, 92.0672 E) situated in Kailashahar Subdivision of Unakoti District, Tripura, North-eastern India (Figure 1) a single individual of Red Imperial butterfly was observed and photographed (Figure 2) on 04.xi.2018 at about 12:30 hrs. The butterfly was observed sitting on a leaf of a wild peritridophyte. The location is a part of semi-

evergreen natural forest characteristic of this region. Only one individual was sighted on that day and it was not observed during subsequent field visits in the same location indicating that it is a rare species in that area.

Discussion

The butterfly observed and photographed was identified as *Suasa lisides* beyond any doubt following suitable keys (Evans, 1932; Kehimkar, 2016). In figure 2, undersides of the wings are clearly visible and a wide reddish-brown band near the leading edge of the forewing is prominent. The dark spot on white hind wing is also present. The orange colour of upper forewings with a blackish-brown border can be seen which confirms the specimen as *Suasa lisides*.

As per published records 212 butterfly species have so far been reported from Tripura (Lodh & Agarwala, 2015). The present observation is the first record of *Suasa lisides* from Tripura which adds to the list of butterflies found in Tripura. The finding is significant as Red Imperial is a rare butterfly and protected under Schedule II of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Very little information is available regarding the early stages and larval food plant of this butterfly species. Therefore, the present record should act as a stimulus for butterfly

researchers and conservationists to take up further studies in exploring the distribution, habitat preference, ecology and life cycle of this species in this eco-region.

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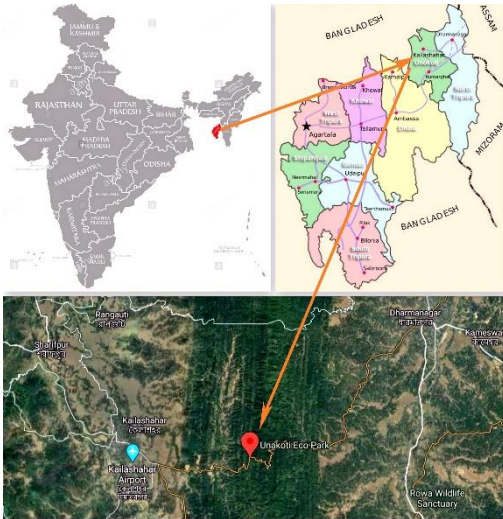


Fig.1: Google map showing the location of *Suasa lisodes* in study area



Fig.2: *Suasa lisodes*