

FIRST RECORD OF COMMON BANDED DEMON BUTTERFLY *NOTOCRYPTA PARALYSOS* FOR NEPAL

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INTRODUCTION

In the last couple of years, the number of reported new species for Nepal has increased considerably. Since the turn of the century, the total number of species hovered for about 18 years around 665 and very few new records were published. The last published list of Nepal's butterfly species (Smith, 2010) lists 661 species. A few new records were reported in grey literature such as Colin Smith's Butterfly Updates. Mostly since 2019, various authors have reported first records for some 25 species. Some authors were students, others naturalists and some collaborated with experienced lepidopterists. The main contribution came from Sajan KC, who started dissecting specimens to compare their genitalia with those of known species from Nepal or elsewhere on the Indian subcontinent. Most of his first records are of Hesperidae, of which several genera have species which are difficult to distinguish based on morphological characteristics alone. However, for some species, including certain skippers, a photograph is sufficient to identify it. Here we report the first record for Nepal of *Notocrypta*

paralysos (Wood-Mason & de Nicéville, 1881), the Common Banded Demon.

Notocrypta paralysos was described in 1881 from the Andaman Islands as *Plesioneura paralysos*, which was reported to resemble *P. alysos*, but having a wider white band and only one forewing apical spot. The Andaman specimens also have one or two hindwing spots, which the mainland specimens, e.g. from the "Sikkim Hills", lack. The reported wingspan was 42-44 mm. Evans (1932) listed the mainland subspecies as *N. p. alysa* (33-40 mm) from Ceylon and Mussoorie in Uttarakhand to Karens in N. Myanmar. In 1949, Evans reclassified the subspecies with *alysa* limited to Ceylon, *mangla* found "throughout the Indian area", and *asawa* from Sikkim to Hainan and Malaysia. It is unclear what happened to the specimen from Mussoorie, but it is assumed that was either an aberration of *N. feisthamelii* or a reporting error. The Funet website lists the distribution area of *N. p. asawa* from Sikkim to Hainan in China. For the Indian subcontinent both Van Gasse (2018) and Varshney & Smetacek (2015) report it from Sikkim to NE India.

Chitwan National Park (952.63 km²) is located between 27°16.56' and 27°42.14'N latitudes and 83°50.23' and 84°46.25'E longitudes in South Central Nepal. This is Nepal's first national park, founded in 1973 and listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1984. The park has a monsoon-dominated sub-tropical climate with average monthly maximum temperatures of 24–38°C, monthly minimum temperatures of 11–26°C, annual rainfall of 2250 mm, and relative

humidity of 89–98% during 2000-2010 (Subedi *et al.*, 2017). Sal (*Shorea robusta*) forest is the dominant vegetation type, covering around 70% of the park's total area. Chitwan National Park is home to 75 mammalian species, 643 birds, 56 herpetofauna species, 121 fish species, (NTNC-BCC, 2020) and more than 247 (Smith, 1998) butterfly species. The present authors estimate that there are some 305 known butterfly species in the Park.

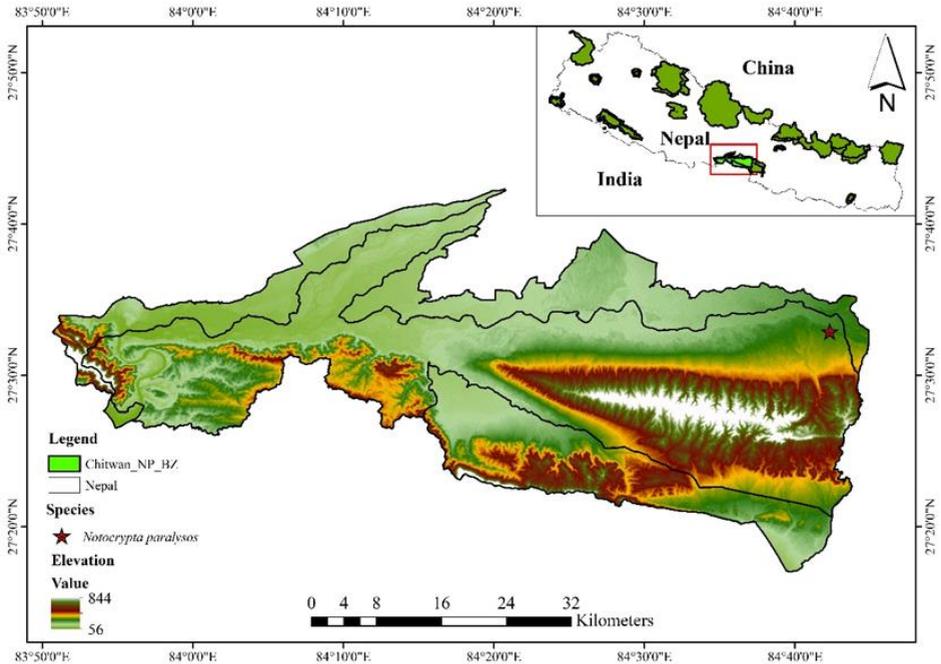


Figure 1. Map of Chitwan National Park in Nepal, showing where *Notocrypta paralyosus* was seen.

OBSERVATIONS

A mating pair of *N. paralyosus* was photographed on 19 December 2014 at 09:30 am in front of the Machan Wildlife

Resort in eastern sector of Chitwan National Park, Bagmati Province (27.548157 N, 84.705002 E, 260 m amsl.; see Figure 1). The species was found on a leaf of Banmara (*Chromolaena odorata*) at the edge of Sal forest. The area is near the border of Parsa National Park. The area was wet and not far from the Rapti River.

Several common butterfly species were also seen in the area, including *Danaus genutia* (Cramer, [1779]) (Common Tiger), *Danaus chrysippus* (Linnaeus, 1758) (Plain Tiger), *Elymnias malelas* (Hewitson, 1863) (Spotted Palmfly), *Euploea core* (Cramer, [1780]) (Common Indian Crow), *Junonia almana* Not (Linnaeus, 1758) (Peacock Pansy) and *Junonia iphita* (Cramer, [1779]) (Chocolate Pansy).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present first record of *Notocrypta paralyos asawa* raises the number of species known to fly or have flown in Nepal to 692. This number is based on a draft version of a new catalogue of butterfly species of Nepal which is presently being compiled (by the second author and others) and includes several

species of which the first records have not yet been published (Sajan KC and Anisha Sapkota, *pers. comm.*).

Finding this species in Chitwan in the Terai area of central Nepal extends the known distribution area of this species some 330 km to the west. A question that cannot be answered is, whether it was always present in this part of Nepal or if it has recently migrated west. There is evidence that several species, such as *Mycalesis adamsoni* Watson, 1897 (Watson's Bushbrown), *Lethe distans* Butler, 1870 (Scarce Red Forester) and *Taraka hamada* (Druce, 1875) (Forest Pierrot) have recently moved into Nepal or extended their range or increased considerably in numbers. Whether any species have greatly decreased in numbers or disappeared from Nepal is at present less clear.



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