

BUTEA SUPERBA ROXB. AS NEW LARVAL HOST PLANT FOR THE CHESTNUT-STREAKED SAILER BUTTERFLY *NEPTIS JUMBHAH* MOORE, [1858] (INSECTA: LEPIDOPTERA: NYMPHALIDAE)

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The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) Nature Reserve is a forested area spread over 33 acres and is nestled between Dadasaheb Phalke Chitra Nagari (aka Film City) and Sanjay Gandhi National Park in Mumbai City of Maharashtra, India. The Reserve also has a small butterfly garden spread over an area of around quarter of an acre.

The Chestnut-streaked Sailer butterfly *Neptis jumbah* Moore, [1858] (Insecta: Lepidoptera: Hesperiiidae) is a common butterfly found here. It is mostly seen during the monsoon and post monsoon in the forests of SGNP and BNHS Nature Reserve, Mumbai.

On 10 September 2023, we found one dark brown caterpillar on the leaf tip of a Palash Climber *Butea superba* Roxb. plant. The caterpillar had eaten both sides of the leaf tip, leaving the midrib intact and it was perched on the midrib. We could identify the caterpillar as of a Sailer *Neptis* sp. We searched for more caterpillars on the Palash Climbers and soon found two more caterpillars on two additional plants, perched in similar fashion on the midrib at leaf tip. The caterpillars had chocolaty

white patches on sides of tail end marked with short white lines.

We collected these caterpillars and reared them in rearing containers. They were fed with leaves of *Butea superba* Roxb. The containers were cleaned of the frass every day. The caterpillars ate the green parts of leaves leaving the midrib and bigger veins intact, creating multiple holes in the leaf or sometimes a small dangling part of the leaf hanging to the remaining vein (see image).

Two caterpillars pupated on 18 September 2023, one on the inner wall of a container and another on the upperside of a leaf. The pupae were cream coloured and shiny, depending on the angle of light. Two adult butterflies eclosed on 25 September 2023 with a pupal diapause of 9 days. Both were released. The third caterpillar was found infected and died on 20 September 2023, after feeding well on the leaves of *B. superba* and showing normal growth.

The reported larval host plants for *N. jumbah* are summarized by Robinson *et al.* (2001) and later by Nitin *et al.* (2018) as: *Bombax*, *Bombax ceiba*, *Byttneria* (Bombacaceae); *Trema* (Cannabaceae);

Elaeocarpus (Elaeocarpaceae); *Mallotus philippensis* (Euphorbiaceae). *Fabaceae*, *Cassia fistula*, *Dalbergia*, *Dalbergia latifolia*, *Erythrina stricta*, *Moullava spicata*, *Pongamia*, *Pongamia pinnata*, *Pterocarpus marsupium*, *Xylia*, *Xylia xylocarpa* (Fabaceae); *Nothapodytes nimmoniana* (Icacinaceae); *Malvaceae*, *Grewia*, *Grewia serrulata*, *Hibiscus*, *Pterygota alata*, *Thespesia populnea* (Malvaceae); *Rhamnaceae*, *Ziziphus*, *Ziziphus jujuba* (Rhamnaceae) and *Urticaceae*.

The sighting of three caterpillars of *N. jumbah* on the *B. superba* plants and its rearing till eclosion of adult butterflies clearly indicates the regular use of the plant as larval host. Looking at the list of

larval host plants reported previously, this is clearly a new record of larval host plant for *N. jumbah* and worth placing on record.

REFERENCES

Nitin, R., V. C. Balakrishnan, P. V. Churi, S. Kalesh, S. Prakash & K. Kunte. 2018. Larval host plants of the butterflies of the Western Ghats, India. *Journal of Threatened Taxa* 10: 11495–11550.

Robinson, G.S., P.R. Ackery, I.J. Kitching, G.W. Beccaloni & L.M. Hernandez. 2001. *Hostplants of the moth and butterfly caterpillars of the Oriental Region*. The Natural History Museum, London and Southdene Sdn. Bhd., Kuala Lumpur. 744 pp.



Figure 1: Chestnut-streaked Sailer caterpillar



Figure 2: Chestnut-streaked Sailer Pupa



Figure 3: Freshly eclosed adult under side



Figure 4: Freshly eclosed adult upper side



Figure 5: Feeding pattern of caterpillar