

FIRST RECORDS FOR NEPAL OF TWO SKIPPER BUTTERFLIES: *GEROSIS SINICA* AND *CEPHRENES ACALLE*

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Abstract

This article presents two species which have, apparently erroneously, been reported from Nepal before in Smith (2010) and in Thapa (1998), and are reported here with photographic evidence.

Introduction

Gerosis sinica (C. & R. Felder, 1862) *narada* (Moore, 1884) White Yellow-breast Flat

Gerosis sinica was described by C. & R. Felder as *Pterygospidea sinica* from Sylhet in N.E. Bangladesh. Evans (1932 & 1949) listed it as *Daimio sinica narada* from Sikkim. *Gerosis bhagava* and *G. phisara* were listed for Nepal by Colin Smith (1994, 2010). *G. sinica* was listed for Nepal with “no data available” by Thapa (1998), not indicating a source. Smith (2010) did not list it and referred to it under “Redundant Names” specifying “Mistake – phisara (female)”. It is not clear on which information this conclusion was based. In his unpublished Butterfly Updates of 2017, Colin Smith reported a picture taken by Vandana Subedi in May 2017 in Pokhara (Figure 1), which first appeared to him to be *G. sinica*. He noted that after much searching he concluded that it was a female *G. bhagava*. Evans (1949) indicated that *G. bhagava* differs from *G. sinica* by the upper forewing cell spot being larger than the spot in space 3. Thus, this identification of Fig.1 is questionable. Peter Smetacek (personal communication) judged it to be a female of *G. phisara*, much like the picture of its female in Kehimkhar (2016).

According to Evans (1949), *G. sinica* differs from *G. phisara* by having a white band in the center of the upper side of the abdomen with the abdomen ends being brown, and having the upper hindwing area unsullied, while *G.*

phisara only has thin white stripes on the abdomen. The individual in Fig.1 appears to be somewhat in between and it could be argued that it may be a somewhat worn *G. sinica*. It is assumed more likely that it is *G. phisara*.

In November and December 2016, I photographed two *Gerosis* butterflies near Pokhara (Fig. 2 & 3). Initially, I listed them as *G. bhagava*, since *G. sinica* was not listed for Nepal and the differences specified in Evans (1932) appeared to indicate that it could well be *G. bhagava*. When checking information for the new catalogue of butterfly species of Nepal, I had access to Evans (1949) and determined that both were actually *G. sinica*, as was confirmed by Peter Smetacek. The two individuals photographed near Pokhara were seen near forest edges on the SE and NE side of Phewa Lake at 800-820m elevation. Both were visiting flowers, of *Lantana camara* and another flowering plant.

Van Gasse (2018-unpublished MS) lists *Gerosis sinica* from Sikkim to NE India. The records reported here extend the known distribution area of *G. sinica* westward from Sikkim to Central Nepal.

Cephenes acalle (Hopffer, 1874)

Cephenes acalle was described as *Hesperia acalle* by Hopffer. Evans (1949) and Smith (2010) listed it as *C. chrysozona*. Subspecies *oceanica* (Mabille, 1904) was described as *Telicota oceanica* and reported from “Océanie

sans localit  precise”, which Evans (1949) somehow interprets as “Oceania (probably Assam)”. However, Funet lists “Papua” as type locality. *C. acalle* is reported from large parts of India, including lower elevations in the Himalayas from Sikkim to Arunachal Pradesh (Van Gasse, 2017 and Varshney & Smetacek, 2015).

C. acalle was listed in Smith (2010) based on a list of species provided to him by Wolfgang Dierl in 1974. This list, supposedly, included all the butterfly species collected during four German zoological expeditions to Nepal between 1962 and 1973. Apparently, no detailed account of these four expedition was ever published. Dierl’s list also included three other species that have not been recorded for Nepal by anybody else. These four species are listed without pictures in the Illustrated Checklist of Butterflies of Nepal (Smith, 2011). In 2016, Colin Smith indicated that he doubted the reliability of the records of these four and some other species. Dierl’s list contained only names and no dates, locations or elevations (of butterfly species collected). In 2020, after repeated requests, the German Zoologische Staatssammlung M nchen (ZSM) reported that it only had specimens from Nepal in its collection of one of these four species, *Ionolyce helicon* (Pointed Lineblue). The collection contained no specimens from Nepal of Dierl’s *Arhopala bazaloides* (Tamil Oakblue), *Colias berylla* (Everest Clouded Yellow) and *C. acalle* (Plain Palm Dart). Consequently, these three species were to be removed from the species list of butterflies of Nepal.

On 3 August 2019, I photographed 6 or 7 individuals of *C. acalle* at the Annapurna Eco-village in Astam at 1490m elevation, not far from Pokhara (Fig. 4 - 6). Most of them stayed together visiting one bunch of zinnia (*Zinnia elegans*) flowers for some 7 hours and hardly moved. On my next visit, nine days later, one female *C. acalle* was observed on the same

bunch of zinnia’s for a brief period of time around 10 a.m. in the morning.

One may assume that some other species which were presented on Dierl’s 1974 list were also misidentified. Although this may be the case, it has little or no impact on the information in Colin Smith’s database, since Dierl’s list provided no additional information on the reported species.

Thus, my observation in Astam now becomes the first published record of *C. acalle* for Nepal. It represents an extension of the known distribution area of *C. acalle* from Sikkim westward to Central Nepal. The total number of butterfly species in Nepal is now about 665 (Van der Poel and Smetacek, in preparation). Although a fairly large number of new species have been reported for Nepal since 2015, the number is only slightly higher than the 660 reported in Smith 2010, since a fair number of species, such as three of the species reported by Dierl, were removed.

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Fig.1: *Gerosis phisara* female



Fig.2: *Gerosis sinica*, upperside



Fig.3: *Gerosis sinica*, underside



Fig.4: *Cephrenes acalle*, female upper side



Fig.5: *Cephrenes acalle*, female, underside



Fig.6: *Cephrenes acalle*, male