

THE SMALLEST AND LARGEST KNOWN VAGRANT BUTTERFLIES *VAGRANS EGISTA* (LEPIDOPTERA: NYMPHALIDAE)

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The genus *Vagrans* Hemming, 1934 is represented by one species in India, *V. egista* (Cramer, [1780]). It occurs in the foothills of the Himalaya from Jammu & Kashmir to N.E. India and also in Jharkhand and Odisha. Although it is commonest at low elevation, it occurs to 1500 m and stragglers find their way even higher.

In the last week of October, 2023, two unusually small specimens of this species were recorded by the first author at the Butterfly Research Centre in Bhimtal. Both specimens were pinned and upon being measured, the wingspan of the smaller specimen (figure 1) turned out to be much smaller than any other known specimens and therefore a new size record for the species.

The wingspan is obtained by measuring from the centre of the thorax to the forewing apex and doubling the result (Evans, 1932). Evans (1932) gives a range of 55-65 mm for the species.

It is not clear why two dwarf specimens occurred together at the same time and place, but evidently, they came from the same batch of eggs, which might have been partially starved because of a lack of

food on the hostplant where they spent the larval stage.

In December of the same year, an unusually large specimen was noted by the authors and collected. Upon being measured, it was half a centimetre larger than the largest known specimen known in the literature. We present measurements and data for both these specimens below:

Vagrans egista sinha (Kollar, [1844])

Specimens examined: 2 ♂♂: Forewing length: 22 mm Expanse: 50 mm, 29.x.2023. Butterfly Research Centre, Bhimtal, Uttarakhand, 1500 m. (Figure 1); Forewing length: 32 mm Expanse: 70 mm, 21.xii.2023 Bhujiaghat (29°18.45'N' 79°31.41'E), Nainital district, Uttarakhand, 624 m. (Figure 1). *Leg.:* Peter Smetacek & Ambica Agnihotri. *Coll.* Butterfly Research Centre, Bhimtal.

From the above it is evident that the specimens examined in this study are smaller than the smallest specimens and larger than the largest specimens measured by Evans (1932) and therefore the smaller and largest specimens represent new size records for the species. Henceforth, the wingspan of this species may be recorded

as 50-70 mm instead of 55-65 mm as given by previous authors.

REFERENCES

Evans, W.H. 1932. *The identification of Indian butterflies*. 2nd ed. Bombay Natural History Society, Bombay. x+454 pp., 32 pl.



Figure 1: *Vagrans egista*, Butterfly Research Centre, Bhimtal, 29.x.2023