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NEW DISTRIBUTION RECORD OF *LETHE BRISANDA* DE NICÉVILLE, 1886 (LEPIDOPTERA: NYMPHALIDAE: SATYRINAE) FROM SIKKIM, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

This study reports the first sighting of *Lethe brisanda*, commonly known as Dark Forester from Tholung valley Dzongu, Sikkim, India. The available literature on the distribution of this species does not indicate any collection or sighting from Sikkim. Therefore, this study reports the new distributional record of this species from Sikkim, India. Further, we have provided the first photographic record of this species from Tholung valley, Sikkim, India.

KEY WORDS: Satyrinae, *Lethe brisanda*, Dark Forester, Tholung valley, Sikkim, India.

INTRODUCTION

The genus *Lethe* has a distributional range from Borneo through the Sunda Islands, Japan, Siberia, the Himalaya, and peninsular India (Mani, 1986). The majority of species in this genus are found

in bamboo forests or grassy patches in the forest, upon which the species are known to feed during the larval stage (Dewan *et al.*, 2018).

Lethe brisanda de Nicéville [1886] was originally described on the basis of a single male collected near Buxa, Bhutan, by Mr. A.V. Knyvett's native collectors. Later, three males and a female at 7,000 ft. and two males at 5,500 ft. were collected from the Naga hills (Nagaland) in September and November (Tytler, 1911). The distribution of *L. brisanda* extends to Bhutan, north eastern India (Nagaland), north eastern Myanmar, hills of West Bengal (Singh, 2014; Kehimkar, 2016) and Yunnan in China, particularly in the Motuo area of southeastern Tibet (Evans, 1915; Huang, 2000; Lang, 2017; Wu, 2017). Its habitat ranges from 1600 meters to 2100 meters in elevation (Kehimkar, 2016). Morphologically, *L. brisanda* closely resembles *Lethe isana* (Kollar, [1844]) but *L. brisanda* has four submarginal spots on the underside of the forewing, while *L. isana* lacks one of these

spots, possessing only three submarginal spots on the underside of the forewing (de Nicéville, 1886).

STUDY AREA

Tholung valley (27°36'47.27" N; 088°27'44.97" E) is situated in Dzongu (Figure 1), Mangan District, Sikkim, India. It is demarcated under buffer zone 3 (BZ3) of the Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve (Chettri *et al.*, 2002).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A solitary individual of *L. brisanda* (Figure 2) was sighted on 1st of September 2023 at Thulong Valley (27°36'47.27" N; 088°27'44.97" E), situated in Dzongu, Mangan District, Sikkim, at an elevation of 2134 m amsl at 14:00 hrs. It was sighted within a forest dominated by *Yushania malinga*, a perennial bamboo species of family Poaceae (Figure 3). It was observed basking on *Y. malinga*, at an estimated height of 2 meters above the ground. The vegetation type of the area is represented by temperate broad leaf forest (Haribal, 1992). Subsequent surveys were conducted for two consecutive days within the same week of the month; however, no additional specimens of *L. brisanda* were encountered during the follow-up surveys.

This study presents the first sighting of *L. brisanda* from Tholung Valley, Sikkim, India, indicating a westward extension to the known range of this species. The discovery of *L. brisanda* in Sikkim, which was previously unknown, reflects the importance of continuous butterflies monitoring efforts, especially in remote and diverse areas such as the Tholung valley, Dzongu. Further, no individuals of

the species were sighted during the follow-up field surveys conducted during the same month. This suggests that the species may have a narrow habitat range.

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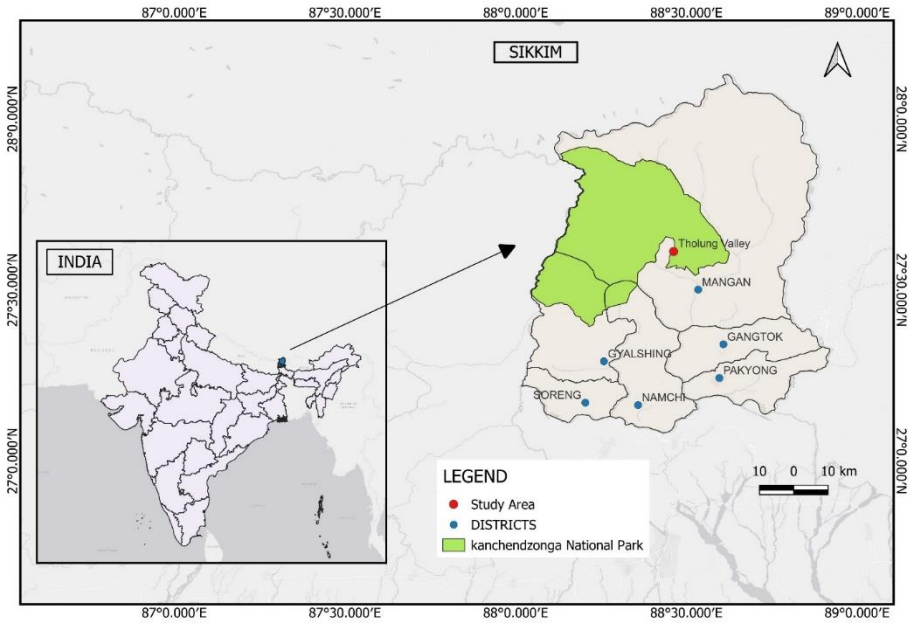


Figure 1. Map showing the site of encounter, in Tholung valley, Dzongu, Mangan district.



Figure 2. Dark forester, *Lethe brisanda* sighted in Tholung Valley, Dzongu, Mangan district.



Figure 2. Dark forester, *Lethe brisanda* sighted in Tholung Valley, Dzongu, Mangan district.