

CYNANCHUM CALLIALATUM: A PUTATIVE NEW LARVAL FOOD PLANT OF THE PLAIN TIGER *DANAUS CHRYSIPPUS* (LEPIDOPTERA: NYMPHALIDAE) FROM AN ECO-RESTORATION SITE OF PUNE, MAHARASHTRA, INDIA

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The Plain Tiger *Danaus chrysippus* (Linnaeus, 1758) (Lepidoptera: Nymphalidae: Danainae) is a widely distributed Nymphalid butterfly occurring in Africa, Asia, Australia, and some parts of Europe (Galanos, 2017). In the Indian sub-region, the butterfly is commonly found throughout the plains, in degraded habitats, woodlands, scrublands, and open areas, but less commonly in evergreen forests and above 2500 m altitude in hilly regions (Smetacek, 2001; Kehimkar, 2016). Previously recorded larval host plants of this butterfly in India are *Asclepias curassavica* L.; *Calotropis gigantea* (L.) Dryand; *Calotropis procera* (Aiton) W.T. Aiton; *Caralluma adscendens* (Roxb.) R. Br.; *Cryptolepis dubia* (Burm. F.) M.R. Almeida; *Pergularia daemia* (Forssk.) Chiov. (Apocynaceae) (Wynter-Blyth, 1957; Kunte, 2000; Robinson *et al.*; 2010; Nitin *et al.*, 2018).

On 15th October 2022, during a field visit to the 14 Trees Foundation, an eco-restoration site at Vetale village, Pune for a biodiversity survey, we came across a single caterpillar feeding on the leaves of a climber plant (Fig. 1). The caterpillar was found feeding on the leaves of the same plant the next day. Later, the caterpillar was identified to be of Plain Tiger *Danaus chrysippus* and the climber plant was identified as *Cynanchum callialatum* Buch.-Ham. ex Wight belonging to the family Apocynaceae.

Hitherto published records show *C. callialatum* as a larval host plant for *Danaus genutia* (Cramer, [1779]) from India (Nitin *et al.*, 2018). Plants belong to the genus *Cynanchum*, such as *C. abyssinicum* Decne.; *C. acutum* L.; *C. altiscandens* K. Schum.; *C. amplexicaule* Sieb. et Zucc.; *C. carnosum* (R.Br) Schltr.; *C. floribundum* R.Br. and *C. sublancoletum* Poir. have already been reported as larval food plants of Plain

Tiger *D. chrysippus* from the Oriental Region (Robinson *et al.*, 2010). However, no records were found concerning *C. callialatum* being a larval host plant of the Plain Tiger butterfly.

Hence, *C. callialatum* could be a putative larval host plant of the Plain Tiger butterfly. However, due to time constraints, we could not carry out further observations regarding pupal formation and emergence. The place of observation is an eco-restoration site which is an attempt to restore the land and enhance the biodiversity with native plants of the Western Ghats.

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Fig. 1. Caterpillar of Plain Tiger butterfly *Danaus chrysippus* feeding on the leaves of *Cynanchum callialatum* at Vetale village, Pune, Maharashtra, India. (Photo: C. Bhatt)