

# **ERANTHEMUM ROSEUM (ACANTHACEAE) AS NEW LARVAL HOST PLANT FOR THE BENGAL SPOTTED FLAT CELAENORRHINUS PUTRA (MOORE, [1866])**

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## **Introduction**

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 Bengal Spotted Flat butterfly *Celaenorrhinus putra* (Moore, [1866]) (Insecta: Lepidoptera: HesperIIDae) is a rare Hesperiid. Historically, the species was known to occur in Eastern Himalayas and Northeast India (Evans 1949). The species has been reported to occur in South India in since 2013 and has been photographed in Western Ghats from Mumbai southwards to Kerala (Bhakare *et al.* 2020). It was recently reported by RK from BNHS Nature Reserve in Mumbai, Maharashtra (Kasambe, 2018).

Since September 2020, we were rearing caterpillars of Malabar Spotted Flat *Celaenorrhinus ambareesa* butterflies (Family HesperIIDae). We got its caterpillars on *Strobilanthes callosus* as well as on *Eranthemum roseum* which are known larval host plants of the species.

## **Observations**

On 14 (two) and 15 October 2020 (one) we found three caterpillars on *Eranthemum roseum* plants with dark brown head; those

were resting in triangular cells (made by cutting and folding a part of the same leaf) with its back towards the leaf surface, head turned round to one side (see image). The cells were on the upper surface of the top leaf of the plant (see image). Parts of two leaves were eaten leaving the veins intact.

We reared these caterpillars on a diet of the leaves of *E. roseum* and cleaned the container of frass every day. All ate well and two pupated in the respective cells on 27 October 2020 (collected on 14 October) and 22 October 2020 (collected on 15 October) on the upperside of leaves. Third caterpillar, collected on 14 October 2020, pupated on 23 October 2020 between two leaves by weaving them together (see images). The pupae were shiny brown and also had antenna cases.

Three adult *C. putra* butterflies eclosed from the pupae on 2 and 5 November 2020 and 30 October 2020 (see images). The adult *C. putra* butterfly can be distinguished from similar looking Common Spotted Flat *C. leucocera* by the absence of white spots between cell and costa. Also, the male and female *C. putra* can be differentiated, as the male have white antennae (see images).

Meanwhile we found few more caterpillars of the *C. putra* on *E. roseum* plants and documented different larval stages (see image).

The only larval host plant reported for the species is *Strobilanthes ciliata* (Kalesh & Prakash 2015; Nitin *et al.* 2018) (Acanthaceae). The above observations, rearing of *C. putra* caterpillars on a diet of *E. roseum* plants to eclosion proves *E. roseum* to be a new larval host plant for the species in India.

### References

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Fig.1: Caterpillar initial instar



Fig.2: Caterpillar final instar



Fig.3: Caterpillar cells on leaf



Fig.4: Pupating



Fig.5: Pupa



Fig.6: Pupa resting between two leaves



Fig.7: Freshly eclosed female



Fig.7: Freshly eclosed male