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**CONFIRMATION OF *ONCOBA SPINOSA* AS LARVAL HOST PLANT
OF THE COMMON LEOPARD BUTTERFLY *PHALANTA
PHALANTHA* (INSECTA: LEPIDOPTERA: NYMPHALIDAE) IN
DELHI, INDIA**

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The butterfly, Common Leopard *Phalanta phalantha* (Drury, [1773])(Lepidoptera: Nymphalidae) is found in sub-Saharan Africa, China, the Indo-Malayan region, Japan and Australia (Bingham, 1905; Williams, 2018). It is widely distributed in India and found up to an altitude of 2280 m (7,500 ft) in the Himalaya (Wynter-Blyth, 1957). It uses several species of plants as its larval host plant belonging to families: Flacourtiaceae, Rubiaceae, Celastraceae, Euphorbiaceae, Salicaceae, Smilacaceae, Acanthaceae, Asteraceae and Violaceae (Williams, 2018; Robinson *et al.*, 2023). In India, it is known to use: *Androsace* spp., *Barleria prionitis*, *Dovyalis hebecarpa*, *Flacourtia* spp., *Gymnosporia bachmannii*, *Populus deltoides*; *Salix tetrasperma*; *Smilax* spp. and *Xylosma longifolia*, as larval host

plants (Wynter-Blyth, 1957; Nitin *et al.*, 2018; Robinson *et al.*, 2023).

P. phalantha was observed laying eggs on young leaves of *Oncoba spinosa* Forssk (Family: Salicaceae) on several occasions in the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) campus, Delhi (Figure 1). *O. spinosa*, a small tree or shrub native to Tropical and South Africa, South-west Arabian Peninsula, has been planted in few parks and gardens of Delhi as an ornamental plant (Anonymous). A few larvae of *P. phalantha*, in their first instar stage (feeding on young leaves of *O. spinosa* outdoors) were reared under ambient temperature and humidity on *O. spinosa* leaves. Two of these turned into pupae after 6–7 days of initiation of rearing, and the pupae eclosed after 5–6 days of pupation (Figure 2).

O. spinosa has been reported as a larval host plant of *P. phalantha* from Afrotropical realm i.e. the native range of *O. spinosa* (Robinson *et al.*, 2023). It has not been previously reported as larval host plant of *P. phalantha* from India. The present communication therefore confirms *O. spinosa* as a larval host plant of *P. phalantha* from Delhi, India.

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Figure 1: *Oncoba spinosa*. (A–B) trunk and bark; (C) flower; (D) leaves, and; (E) fruit. Images © Sandeep Kannan.



Figure 2: Various stages in the life cycle of *Phalanta phalantha* reared on *O. spinosa*. (A-B) larvae; (C) Pupa, and (D) Imago. Images © Sandeep Kannan.