

NEW DISTRIBUTION RECORD FOR THE RED PIERROT BUTTERFLY *TALICADA NYSEUS* (LEPIDOPTERA: LYCAENIDAE) FROM SIKKIM HIMALAYA, INDIA

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Sikkim Himalaya, located in northeast India, is renowned for its rich biodiversity, especially in the Himalayan biogeographic zone. It supports a diverse range of flora and fauna, including over 689 species of butterflies (Acharya & Vijayan, 2011). The Butterfly and Moths of Sikkim-Nature Conservation Society (BAMOS-NCS) has been started, diligently tracking and recording the various kinds of butterflies found in the Sikkim Himalayas since 2011. During a field survey on the way to 6th mile Tadong, Gangtok East Sikkim (27°31'057N, 88° 59'759E), on 8th November 2023, we spotted a *Talica nyseus* (Guérin-Ménéville, 1843) butterfly sitting near a car wash site at an elevation of 1600m. This small yet beautiful butterfly is known to flutter frequently in front of car mirrors and puddles near car wash areas. We took photographs (Fig. 1) of the butterfly from the spot and confirmed its identity using various reference books and online platforms. We spotted the species in an urban area, highlighting the importance of such a region in the conservation context. Urban areas may offer unique ecological niches for common or uncommon species to thrive. The area's vegetation is with

associated floral species such as *Alnus nipalensis*, *Ficus* sp., and *Musa* sp. (Banana) on private land. The herb species found in the area were *Centenella* sp., *Drumeria* sp., *Eupatorium* sp., and *Artemesia* sp. The distinct black upper side of the wings, a large orange portion on the lower edge of the hindwing, and the colourful mix of white on the underside with black and orange markings make identification of *Talica nyseus* easier (Kehimkar, 2016; Bhakare & Ogale, 2018; Smetacek, 2016). However, this is the first report of this species from Sikkim, as far as we know, and it has not been reported in existing articles on the subject (Haribal, 1992; Varshney & Smetacek, 2015; Kehimkar, 2016). Therefore, our findings will be the first scientific report to support the occurrence of *Talica nyseus* in Sikkim, as there is no previous scientific record of the species from the state.

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Fig-1: Red Pierrot (*Talicada nyseus*) from 6th mile Tadong, East Sikkim.