

UNUSUAL RECORD OF A MALE GOLDEN BIRDWING BUTTERFLY *TROIDES AEACUS* (LEPIDOPTERA: PAPILIONIDAE) IN RAJASTHAN, INDIA

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The Golden Birdwing *Troides aeacus* (C. & R. Felder, 1860) is a widespread butterfly, with a known distribution from Uttarakhand, India along the Himalaya to N.E. India, the Malay peninsula, Indo-China and Taiwan (Shirozu, 1960). It feeds on leaves and fruit of *Aristolochia* species in the larval stage (Smetacek, 2011). Smetacek (2011) has shown that the altitudinal distribution of this species along the Himalaya is determined by the presence of its larval hostplant. Therefore, although the species occurs at 40 m elevation in Assam, in the western Himalaya it is not generally found below 1600 m, the lowest elevation at which the larval hostplant is found, with occasional stragglers as low as 1200 m. It has never been reported from the Terai-Bhabar area, which is the low-lying area adjoining the foothills of the Himalaya in Uttarakhand and Nepal.

On 25 September 2023, at 8 am, a single male of this species was photographed (figures 1-3) near Sariska Tiger Reserve at Utsav Camp, Murlipura village (27.2596868 N 76.4606907 E), Tehla-Tlab Rajgarh, Alwar, Rajasthan.

This is an extremely unusual record, since the closest known habitat for this species is in Nainital, Kumaon, Uttarakhand, more than 350 km as the crow flies from Sariska. The butterfly arrived from the north, settled on the flowers of *Tectona*

grandis for around 2 minutes, during which time it was photographed since MP was already photographing *Hasora chromus* (Cramer, [1780]), *Suastus gremius* (Fabricius, 1798), etc, which were gathered on the flowers before the unexpected arrival of the *T. aeacus*.

It was noted that the butterfly was flying from north to south. While some Himalayan species like *Pieris brassicae* (Linnaeus, 1758), *P. canidia* (Linnaeus, 1768), *Colias fieldii* Menetries, 1855, *Aglaia caschmirensis* (Kollar, [1844]) have been recorded from Delhi as winter migrants from the hills, there is no record for a summer migrant from the hills to the plains of India.

Normally, females help disperse the species, and it is unusual for a single male to be found so far from its known habitat. However, although no conclusions can be drawn from the presence of *T. aeacus* in Rajasthan in September, the fact that it was observed there is worth placing on record in the hope that workers might obtain further records and gain insight into the movement of this species in the coming years.

References

Shirozu, T. 1960. *Butterflies of Formosa in colour*. Hoikusha Publishing Co. Osaka. 481 pp., 76 pl.

Smetacek, P. 2011. On the anomalous altitudinal distribution of the West Himalayan Troidini and Papilionini

(Papilionidae). *Journal of the Lepidopterists' Society* 65(2): 126 – 132.



Figure 1: *Troides aeacus* male, Utsav Camp, Murlipura village



Figure 2: *Troides aeacus* male, Utsav Camp, Murlipura village



Figure 3: *Troides aeacus* male, Utsav Camp, Murlipura village on *Tectona grandis* flowers