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NOTE

ADDITIONAL RECORD OF THE POORLY KNOWN ARGUS PARALASA NEPALICA (PAULUS, 1983) (INSECTA: LEPIDOPTERA: NYMPHALIDAE) IN NEPAL

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Additional Record of the Poorly Known Argus Paralasa nepalica (Paulus, 1983) (Insecta: Lepidoptera: Nymphalidae) in Nepal

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The genus Paralasa (Moore, 1891) belongs to the family Nymphalidae which is also linked to the genus Callerebia. The recent molecular phylogeny support Miller (1968) who proposed the placement of Paralasa within the Callerebia series of Ypthimina (Peña et al. 2006), however, the life history and karyotype study by Sauracov & Emmel (2008) showed no new evidence supporting its affinity with Ypthimina. It is usually distributed in the higher mountains of central Asia (NW-Himalaya, Szechwan, East Tibet, Karakorum, Pamir, Tien Shan, Hindukush (Vis & Coene 1987)).

This genus is easily identifiable by the presence of a distinct row of 5–7 white points on the underside of the hindwing in the female and reduced white in the male. The underside of females is bicolor since forewing apex and the whole hindwing are covered with a dense layer of whitish-grey scales. The apex of the forewing is sharpened, the eye-spot is round with a single white pupil (Churkin & Tuzov 1998). The female is somewhat bigger than the male.

There are 30 species of Paralasa recorded globally (NHM 2018) and Nepal is home to a single species, Paralasa nepalica. In 1973, Paralasa material was collected from northwestern Nepal by Martens. The material was studied by Paulus (1982), who realized that the species was new and described it as P. nepalica, representing the easternmost species of the genus Paralasa (Vis & Coene 1987). The species is considered endemic to Nepal (Smith 1994).

After the first collection by Martens in 1973 (Vis & Coene 1987), there have been only two additional records till date, one from Chya lekh, Mahakali, northwestern Nepal, at an elevation of 3,740m (Morishita & Innomata 1998) and another above Phoksumdo Village, Dolpa, at 3,500m (Sourakov & Emmel 2008). This is the fourth observation record of this species in Nepal, obtained about 166km north-west from Dolpa and 68.7km north-east from Chya lekh, Darchula, Nepal. Also, no photograph of this species is known to have been taken yet in its natural habitat. The photograph presented here is most likely to be the first for this species in its natural habitat.

We observed the butterfly in Talung Valley (30.2030N & 81.700E, 4,400m) of upper Humla, Province - 6, on 27 July 2017 at 1:30hr. The butterfly was basking by the roadside along with two other butterflies—Indian Tortoishell Aglais cashmirensis and Lofty Bath White Pontia callidice.

Like most Paralasa species, P. nepalica is mentioned...
to prefer pine forest belt (Vis & Coene 1987), however, the observation presented in this paper is very different as the habitat is characterized by a wide valley interspersed by big boulders and rocky hills with steep trails that are mostly covered with lichens, grasses, forbs, sedges, and shrubs. The anomaly in the observation calls for further research to better understand the habitat and ecology of the species.

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Articles

Distribution of the threatened Assamese Macaque
*Macaca assamensis* (Mammalia: Primates: Cercopithecidae) population in Nepal
– Laxman Khanal, Mukesh Kumar Chalise & Xuelong Jiang, Pp. 13047–13057

Redescription of *Leposternon octostegum* (Duméril, 1851), with an identification key for Brazilian *Leposternon* species, remarks on meristic methodology, and a proposal for pholidosis nomenclature
(Squamata: Amphisbaenidae)
– José Duarte de Barros-Filho, Marco Antonio de Freitas, Thais Figueiredo Santos Silva, Mariana Fiuza de Castro Loguercio & Maria Celeste Costa Valverde, Pp. 13058–13086

Communications

Annotated checklist and conservation status of mammals of Fars Province, southern Iran
– Fatah Zarei, Sasan Kafaei & Hamid Reza Esmaeili, Pp. 13087–13113

Functional sperm assessments of African Lion
*Panthera leo* (Mammalia: Carnivora: Felidae) in field conditions
– Thiesa Butterby Soler Barbosa, Daniel de Souza Ramos Angrimani, Bruno Rogério Rui, João Diego de Agostini Losano, Luana de Cássia Bicudo, MarcelHenrique Blank, Marcello Nichi & Cristiane Schilbach Pizzutto, Pp. 13114–13119

Description of a new species of *Pseudophilautus* (Amphibia: Rhacophoridae) from southern Sri Lanka
– Sudesh Batuwita, Madura De Silva & Sampath Udgampala, Pp. 13120–13131

Marine snakes of Indian coasts: historical resume, systematic checklist, taxonomy, status, and identification key
– S.R. Ganesh, T. Nandhini, V. Deepak Samuel, C.R. Sreeraj, K.R. Abhilash, R. Purvaja & R. Ramesh, Pp. 13132–13150

Short Communications

Feeding trails of Dugong *Dugong dugon* (Müller, 1776) (Mammalia: Sirenia: Dugongidae) in the Gulf of Kachchh, western coast of India
– Deepak Apte, Dishant Parasharya & Bhavik Patel, Pp. 13151–13154

Population status and floral biology of *Trichopus zeylanicus* ssp. *travancoricus* Burkill ex K. Narayanan (Dioscoreaceae), an important ethnomedicinal plant of the southern Western Ghats, India
– Nambi Sasikala & Raju Ramasubbu, Pp. 13156–13161

Notes

The importance of trans-boundary conservation of the Asiatic Elephant *Elephas maximus* in Patharia Hills Reserve Forest, northeastern India
– Nazimur Rahman Talukdar, Parthankan Choudhury & Rofik Ahmed Barhiwia, Pp. 13168–13170

Breeding record of Common Hoopoe *Upupa epops* (Aves: Upupidae) at Satchari National Park in northeastern Bangladesh
– Sabit Hasan, Tanvir Ahmed & Hassan Al-Razi, Pp. 13171–13172

Additional record of the poorly known *Argus Paralasa nepalica* (Paulus, 1983) (Insecta: Lepidoptera: Nymphalidae) in Nepal
– Sanje Prasad Suwal, Krishna Dev Hengaju & Naresh Kusi, Pp. 13173–13174

First report of the catfish *Nilgiri Mystus Hemibagrus punctatus* (Jerdon, 1849) (Bagridae) from Stanley Reservoir, Tamil Nadu, India
– Jayasimhan Praveenraj, Nallathambi Moullitharan & M.P. Goutah-Bharathi, Pp. 13175–13179

The easternmost distribution and highest elevation record of the rare Desert Cat Snake *Telescopus rhinopoma* (Reptilia: Colubridae) in Pakistan
– Daniel Jablonski & Rafaqat Masroor, Pp. 13180–13183

A checklist of spider fauna of Rajasthan, India
– Neisseril Anirudhan Kashmeera & Ambalaparambil Vasu Sudhikumar, Pp. 13184–13187

New records of *Chrysomya putoria* and *C. thanomthini* (Diptera: Calliphoridae) from India, with a revised key to the known Indian species
– Meenakshi Bharti, Pp. 13188–13190

Lectotypification of *Impatiens duclouxii* Hook.f., a new addition to the flora of India from Arunachal Pradesh
– Rajib Gogoi, Umeshkumar L. Tiwari, Souravjyoti Borah & Vladmir Bajar Theodore Tham, Pp. 13191–13194