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Cover Photo by Peter Smetacek of a *Salassa mizorama* Moth

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CONFIRMATION OF PALE GREEN AWLET *BURARA GOMATA* (LEPIDOPTERA: HESPERIIDAE) FROM EASTERN NEPAL

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Abstract

The Pale Green Awlet, *Burara gomata* (Moore, [1866]) was first recorded in 1990 during a Japanese expedition in Eastern Nepal. The specimen was taken to Japan, and the species was not listed in the checklist of butterflies of Nepal. During a survey in Sankhuwasabha district across buffer zone of Makalu National Park, an individual of this species was recorded.

Introduction

B. gomata has 7 sub-species that range from India to China, Indo-China, Thailand, Malay Peninsula, Sumatra, Java, Borneo, Palawan, Philippines and Suwalesi region (Vane-Wright & De Jong, 2003). Among these, two subspecies are recorded from the Indian sub-continent viz, *B. gomata gomata* and *B. gomata kanara* (Evans, 1926). *B. gomata gomata* was described from Darjeeling and has a known distribution from Darjeeling, Sikkim and Assam to Vietnam whereas *B. gomata kanara* occurs in southern India (Chiba, 2009). The subspecies *B. gomata gomata* has several records from north east India (Das *et al.*, 2017) particularly in protected areas. In Nepal, a Japanese

expedition recorded *B. gomata gomata* from Sankhuwasabha district in 1990 (Morishita & Inomata, 1998). This was the only record of the species from Nepal which is also its westernmost range. The publication of that discovery was based on a specimen which was taken to Japan. The species has not been recorded since that initial discovery. The species has not been listed by Smith (2010; 2011) in the lists of Nepal butterflies. This appears to be an oversight.

Materials and methods

Opportunistic butterfly surveys were carried out in the Eastern Himalaya of Nepal for the purpose of understanding the species richness of that area. During a visit to the buffer zone of Makalu Barun National Park, an individual of *B. gomata* was photographed on 17 October, 2018 from Makalu rural-municipality, Sankhuwasabha district (N 27.56824 and E 87.30830, 1175m). The species was photographed mudpuddling early in the morning, around 7:30 a.m. on farmland, situated at the edge of a forest that borders the Arun river, one of the tributaries of Koshi river. The species was initially observed fluttering around the wet mud and then

puddling on a rock for around 5 minutes. The identity of the photographed specimen was confirmed by comparing it with the Kehimkar (2016) and website images of Butterflies of India (Kunte *et al.*, 2019). The species although similar in appearance to Small Green Awlet *Burara amara* (Moore, [1866]) can easily be distinguished by the presence of a broad whitish streak from base through cell to outer edge on underside of hindwing (Kehimkar, 2016). Of the two subspecies in India viz *B. gomata gomata* and *B. gomata kanara*, the latter has a shorter dark streak at the end of vein 5 which does not reach cell end on the ventral hind wing unlike *B. gomata gomata* in which the streak reaches cell end (Chiba, 2009). Moreover, *B. gomata kanara* is recorded only from the southern parts of India.

Result and Discussion

The present record of the subspecies is the second, 38 years after its initial discovery in Nepal. The first record was from September, which is within the known flight period of the butterfly from May to September (Kehimkar, 2016) but the present record extends the known flight period to October. Though the previous record was from the same district, detailed information on the site locality and behavioral description were not mentioned. Both these butterflies were, however, recorded at nearby sites i.e. Num in same district i.e. Sankhuwasabha, indicating that the species might be established in the locality. The present site of the record lies about 100 km northwest of Darjeeling, India confirming the western most distribution range of the subspecies, *B. gomata gomata*. The long period between the two records of the species may be due to the lack of surveys in the area. The present record confirms the presence of the species in Nepal.

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We are grateful to Mr. Mahendra Singh Limbu

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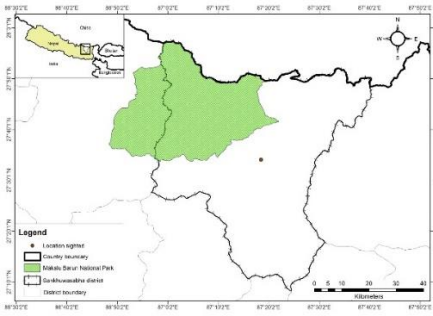


Fig.1: Map showing the site of record in Nepal.



Fig.2: *Burara gomata gomata*, Sankhuwasabha dist, Nepal (1175m).