

Project Update: May 2012

The field work for the above project has now been completed based on the three-week survey conducted in April 2012. I am mentioning a summary of the project for your perusal.

Current activities and updates

The three main activities of the project are reviewed below.

1) Conduct Lepidoptera survey:

Three-week Lepidopteran surveys have been conducted in October 2010, Mar 2011, May 2011 Sep 2011 and Apr 2012 covering the entire Kameng Protected Area Complex, namely Pakke Tiger Reserve (3 sites), Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary (2 sites) and Sessa Orchid WLS (1 site). The surveys, now totaling 70 field days, were conducted at altitudes starting from 50m up to 3000 m.



Landslides, mists and other hurdles don't stop the surveys!

Butterfly survey

As an outcome of the ongoing survey, over 390 butterfly species have photographed and identified, which is close to one fourth of the number of butterfly species recorded from India (~1250 species). Population data was collated to support establishing a baseline. Numerous range extensions, and a species that has not been reported before from India were recorded during the survey. A full-fledged paper in a peer-reviewed journal is under preparation to report these findings.



Left: Blue Forester (*Lethe scanda*). Middle: Common Imperial (*Cheritra freja*). Right: Redbreast (*Papilio alcmenor*).

Moth survey

An estimated 1000 to 1200 distinct species of moths were photographed during the moth survey conducted in parallel to the butterfly survey.



Left: *Pterothysanus laticilia*. Right: *Osteosema pastor*.



Barsine cardinalis

Given the scant information available on Indian moths, a substantial amount of time has been spent in putting together sufficient literature and books to identify the moths. At this point in time, an estimated 400 species of moths have been identified and are most of these are available for online preview at <http://www.titlitrust.com/Moths.html>

Work to identify the moths continues on an ongoing basis. Amongst the highlight of the moth survey includes the records of a Bombycid moth species which was known only from Thailand, and another Bombycid that was known to science based on specimens collected from Sikkim. Numerous range extensions have been recorded, and additional information will emerge as the identification work continues.

2) Initiate Lepidoptera Tourism

In October 2010, we presented this project at the 3rd Asian Lepidoptera Conference and Symposium. The presentation of the project won the "Best Presentation" Award at the conference, and the work we were doing was appreciated by all. In addition, awareness was created about the tourism component of the project.

A poster titled "Moths of Eaglenest" was created and distributed to the Arunachal Forest Department. This will be used to promote the tourism effort. Additional moth and butterfly posters have been requested by various managers of protected areas, and these are under preparation.

Engagement with Indian and overseas stakeholders have been initiated in order to assess the potential for moth tourism. In May 2011, Paul Waring, a leading lepidopterist from the UK spent 3 weeks in the study area to get a first-hand assessment of the moths in the area, and the potential for moth tourism.

The first moth and butterfly tour is being planned in Sep/Oct 2012 which has been identified as one of the promising season for moth and butterfly tourism in this area.

On the the last visit in Apr 2012, a young local naturalist from Nagaland, who is keenly interested in butterflies, was invited to the field trip as part of the effort of capability building of local resources in north east India. Efforts to train the local community will accelerate as the first tour gets conducted later in the year.

3) Establish baseline data

Butterfly population data has been recorded during the surveys and will form a part of the formal paper that is being compiled for the same.

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