

Short Communication

FIRST REPORT OF A HITHERTO UNKNOWN LARVAL FOOD PLANT OF THE BROWN KING CROW, *EUPLOEA KLUGII* MOORE (LEPIDOPTERA : INSECTA)

The caterpillars of the Brown King Crow butterfly, *Euploea klugii* Moore (synonym : *Euploea crassa* Butler), are known to feed on *Ficus hispida* and *Streblus asper*, members of the plant family Moraceae (Wynter-Blyth, 1957., Kunte, 2000). In the present communication, we are reporting *Ficus tinctoria* (Fam : Moraceae) as a host plant of the Brown King Crow for the first time.

On 17, August 2001, we noticed a caterpillar (Fig. 1) feeding on a *Ficus tinctoria* plant growing by the side of a compound wall in Calicut city, Kerala. The fig plant locally known as 'Ithi' or 'Kal-Ithi' is common throughout the Calicut city, often found growing on compound walls and ill-maintained buildings. The caterpillar appeared similar to that of the Common Indian Crow, *Euploea core* (Cramer). The full grown caterpillar was highly voracious and consumed one full leaf of the plant within 25 minutes. The caterpillar was taken and reared in lab. It pupated 3 days later. The pupa (Fig. 2), unlike that of *E. core*, was larger in size and lustrous green in colour with golden lines on the wing margins, its predominant green colour making it not so easy to be located on the leaf on which it was attached. Eight days after pupation, the butterfly (Fig. 3) emerged from the pupa. It was a male specimen and identified as the Brown King Crow belonging to the subspecies *Euploea klugii kollari* C. & R. Felder.

E. k. kollari occurs mainly during the monsoon. While on the wing, it can easily be mistaken for the Common Indian Crow, *E. core* and the Double-branded Black Crow, *E. sylvester* (Fabricius) to which it resembles. However, *E. k. kollari* can be distinguished by the following combination of characters that the species possesses. Wings black, marked with white marginal and terminal spots; wings broader than in *E. core* and *E. sylvester*; upper surface of the wing, in male, with a short, broad brand (brand short but not broad in *E. core* and two brands, parallel and longer in *E. sylvester*) and upper surface of the hind wing with a large, pale brownish- yellow area in and above the cell (not found in *E. core* and *E. Sylvester*). Besides these distinguishing characters, in the female of *E. k. kollari*, undersurface of the forewing may or may not have a white streak in interspace 1b, whereas *E. core* possesses a short whitish streak (not minute as in *E. klugii*) and *E. sylvester* has two similar streaks. In addition, females of the Common Indian Crow and the Double-branded Black Crow have a spot in the cell on the undersurface of the forewing, which is lacking in the Brown King Crow.

With its four subspecies namely, *E. k. kollari* C. & R. Felder, *E. k. sinhala* Moore, *E. k. klugii* Moore and *E. k. erichsonni* C. & R. Felder, the Brown King Crow is usually a butterfly of low elevations preferring wet jungle country (Talbot, 1947). Nevertheless, the butterfly can be found, at times at higher elevations while migrating. The species is found in India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Bhutan, Nepal, east to Indo-China and Sumatra (Wynter-Blyth, 1957; Larsen, 1987; Mondal and Maulik, 1997). Within Indian limits, *E. klugii* Moore occurs in southern India (The Malabar coast, the western ghats and the eastern ghats), Orissa, Bengal and North-eastern India (Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Sikkim). The subspecies exhibiting brilliant blue gloss on wings, found in the North-eastern India belong to *E. k. klugii*. Though the species is locally common in Sri Lanka and North-eastern India, it is local and rare in southern India.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors are grateful to Dr. J. R. B. Alfred, Director, Zoological Survey of India, Kolkata for facilities and encouragement.

REFERENCES

- Kunte, K. 2000. *Butterflies of Peninsular India*. University Press (India) Limited, Hyderabad. 254 pp.
- Larsen, T B. 1987. The butterflies of the Nilgiri mountains of southern India (Lepidoptera : Rhopalocera). *J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* **84**(2) : 291-316.
- Mandal, D. K. and Maulik, D. R. 1997. Insecta : Lepidoptera : Rhopalocera Papilionidae and Danaine Nymphalidae. In *State Fauna Series 3 Fauna of West Bengal, Part-7* : 755-793, Zoological Survey of India, Kolkata.
- Talbot, G. 1947. *The fauna of British India including Ceylon and Burma. Butterflies* Vol. II. Taylor & Francis. London. 506 pp.
- Wynter-Blyth, M. A. 1957. *Butterflies of Indian Region*. Bombay Natural History Society, Bombay. 523 pp.

*Western Ghats Field Research Station,
Zoological Survey of India,
Calicut-673 002*

C. RADHAKRISHNAN
AND
MUHAMED JAFER PALOT