

A new natural enemy of *Spilarctia obliqua* Walk. (Lepidoptera: Arctiidae)

M. Ahmad and M. Faisal

Forest Entomology Division, F.R.I., Dehradun 248006, India

Email: ahmadm@icfre.org

Spilarctia obliqua Walk. a polyphagous defoliator is commonly known as Bihar hairy caterpillar. The farming community is familiar with this pest as it defoliates 96 host plants belonging to 34 different families including *Butea frondosa*, *Cedrela toona*, *Mangifera indica*, *Paulownia fortunei* etc. It has also been reported infesting 15 species of medicinal plants including *Asparagus officinalis*, *Butea monosperma*, *Cordia tremula*, *Hibiscus rosasinensis*, *Mentha arvensis*, *Ocimum* spp, *Tinospora cordifolia* and *Wibania somnifera* (Mathur, 1962).

In spite of its wide range of host plants and its pest status, *S. obliqua* attracts number of natural enemies in the form of parasitoids and predators. *S. obliqua* has been reported to be parasitized in nature during its all development stages including egg, larva and pupa. Important egg parasitoids recorded on *S. obliqua* include *Trichogramma perkinsi*, *T. australicum* (Somchaudury and Dutt, 1988) and *Telenomus molorchus* (Joshi *et al.*, 1983).

Association of larval parasitoid *Apanteles oblique* walk. (Singh and Gangrade, 1975) and pupal parasitoid *Blepharella lateralis* (Kumar and Yadav, 1987) has also been reported with *S. obliqua*.

During insect survey at Sahaspur (Dehradun) second instars larvae of *S. obliqua* were collected on *Paulownia fortunei* in August 2003. The larvae was brought to the laboratory and reared in glass chimney cages by providing fresh *Paulownia* foliage daily. The larvae got pupated but adult did not emerge. Instead emergence of parasitic wasps was recorded from such pupae. The parasitoids was identified as *Brachymeria lasus* walk. (Hymenoptera: Chalcididae). It forms new parasitic record on the larvae/pupae of *S. obliqua* and a new host record to the parasitoid.

B. lasus (Walk), a widely distributed pupal parasitoid, has been reported parasitise over hundred insect species belonging to Lepidoptera, Hymenoptera, Diptera etc. (Habu, 1962). Its potential as a biocontrol agent against *S. obliqua* has to be explored.

References

- Habu, A. (1962). Chalcididae, Leucospididae and Dagrionidae (Insecta : Hymenoptera), *Fauna japonica. Biogeographical Society of Japan*, Tokyo, 299 pp.
- Kumar, N. and Yadav, R.P. (1987). Records of *Blepharella lateralis* Macquart and *Carcelia* sp. two indigenous parasitoids of *Spilosoma (Dicrisia) obliqua* Walk. from Bihar (India). *Current Science*, 56(220): 1122-1123
- Joshi, R.C., Rao, R.K. and Rao, B.H.K. (1983). Occurrence of *Telenomus (Aholeus) molorchus* Nixon as an egg parasitoid of Bihar hairy caterpillar. *Indian J. Ent.* 45(4): 499.

Mathur, A.C. (1962). Food plant spectrum of *Diacrisia obliqua* Walk. (Arctiidae: Lepidoptera) *Indian J. Ent.* 24(4): 286-287.

Singh, O.P. and Gangrade, G.A. (1975). Parasites, predators and diseases of larvae of *Diacrisia obliqua* Walk. (Lepidoptera: Arctiidae) on soyabean. *Current science*. 44(13): 481-482.

Somchoudhury, A.K. and Dutt, N. (1988). Influence of hosts and hosts ages on the bionomics of *Trichogramma perkinsi* Girault. and *Trichogramma australicum* Girault. *Indian J. Ent.* 50(3): 374-379.

First record of *Nephila pilipes* (Fabricius, 1793) from Nepal (Araneae: Nephilidae)

Dimitar Bechev¹ and Christo Deltchev²

¹Department of Zoology, University of Plovdiv, 24 Tzar Assen Str., BG-4000 Plovdiv, Bulgaria, Email: bechev@uni-plovdiv.bg

²Department of Taxonomy, Faunology and Zoogeography, Institute of Zoology, BAS, 1 Tsar Osvoboditel Blvd, BG-1000 Sofia, Bulgaria, Email: cdeltchev@zoology.bas.bg

Introduction

The giant wood spider *Nephila pilipes* (Fabricius, 1793) is a large species with length of the body by female about 40-43mm (Hormiga *et al.*, 2000), which constructs orb webs in the understorey of tropical/subtropical forests (Murphy & Murphy, 2000). The species is distributed in an area from China and Philippines to Australia (Platnick, 2008), and also India (Su *et al.*, 2007).

A female specimen was observed and photographed in Nepal, Annapurna Conservation Area, near Tatopani, 1190 m a.s.l., 12.October, 2006. The web is in distance about 4 m from the ground, on single tree situated near wood. The locality is in subtropical life zone (Shrestha, 2003).

Acknowledgements: We thank Dr. Matjaž Kuntner (Ljubljana) for confirmation of the specific identification on the base of the photo and University Fund – Plovdiv, for the financial support of the expedition in Nepal.

References

- Hormiga, G., N. Scharff and J. Coddington (2000). The Phylogenetic basis of sexual size dimorphism in Orb-Weaving spiders (Araneae, Orbiculariae). *Systematic Biology* 49 (3): 435–462.
- Murphy, F. and J. Murphy (2000). *An introduction to the spiders of Southeast Asia*. Malaysian Nature Society, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 625 pp.
- Platnick, N. (2008). The world spider catalog, version 8.5. American Museum of Natural History, Available from: <http://research.amnh.org/entomology/spiders/catalog/index.html> (accessed 21 February 2008).
- Shrestha, T. (2003). *Wildlife of Nepal: A study of renewable resources of Nepal Himalayas*. R. K. Printers, Kathmandu, Nepal, 720 pp.
- Su, Y.-C., Y.-H. Chang, S.-C. Lee and I.-M. Tso (2007). Phylogeography of the giant wood spider (*Nephila pilipes*, Araneae) from Asian–Australian regions. *Journal of Biogeography* 34: 177–191.



Original photography (not published in the journal)