

A new species of *Ceryx* Wallengren (Lepidoptera: Arctiidae: Syntominiinae) from the Kumaon Himalaya, India

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The genus *Ceryx* Wallengren is a large genus, with representatives in south and west Africa, through Asia, to Australia. Hampson (1892) reported *C. hyalina* Moore, *C. diptera* Fabricius (as *Syntomoides incipiens* Walker and *Syntomoides brachypecten* Hampson) and *C. cherra* Moore (under *Syntomis* Ochseneheimer) from the Indian subregion. None of the above mentioned species were reported from the western Himalaya.

The following is a description of a new species recorded in the western Himalaya, which bears the characteristic hindwing venation lacking veins 3, 5 and 6 (Fig. 1) that distinguishes the monobasic *Syntomoides* Hampson, *Ceryx* and *Auriculoceryx* Holloway from other genera of the sub-family Syntominiinae. *Syntomoides* is monobasic, differing from *Ceryx* in certain features of the male genitalia. Males of the genus *Auriculoceryx* have filiform antennae. From the illustration of the hindwing venation of *S. imacon* in Hampson (1892) and Holloway (1988), the present species differs in having vein 4 straight rather than arched.

The type material of this and other taxa described by

the author (*Neptis miah varshneyi*; *Neptis clinia praedicta*; *Comostola hauensteini*; *Dysaethria himalayica*, etc.) are in the author's personal collection at the Butterfly Research Centre, The Retreat, Jones Estate, Bhimtal, Uttarakhand. This collection is the only Indian insect collection on open public display. Some types, eg. of *Neptis miah varshneyi* (paratype) and *Neptis clinia praedicta* (holotype) have been deposited in the Indian National Forest Insect Collection at the Forest Research Institute, Dehra Dun, Uttarakhand. Other type material may be deposited in that depository in future, pending a change in chemical preservatives used in that institution.



Ceryx mirabilis sp. nov.

(Fig. 1, Images 1-2)

Material Examined

Holotype: Male, 30.viii.2008 Shyamkhet 2000m, Nainital District, Uttarakhand, India. *Legit et collectavit*, Peter Smetacek, The Retreat, Jones Estate, Bhimtal, Uttarakhand, India; Reg.no. 1-TS-2009.

Paratypes: 3 exs.: 1 female, same data as holotype; 1 pair 11.ix.2008 in the same locality. *Leg. et Coll.* Peter Smetacek, The Retreat, Jones Estate, Bhimtal, Uttarakhand, India. Reg.no. 2-TS-2009 (female, 30.viii.2008); 3-TS-2009 (male, 11.ix.2008); 4-TS-2009 (female, 11.ix.2008) respectively.

Etymology

In Latin, *mirabilis* means "wonderful".

Forewing Length

Holotype: 11mm; Paratypes: 11mm.

Description

Holotype: Head black with a pair of yellow spots on collar; antennae minutely serrate; thorax and abdomen black with a pair of subdorsal yellow lines extending from

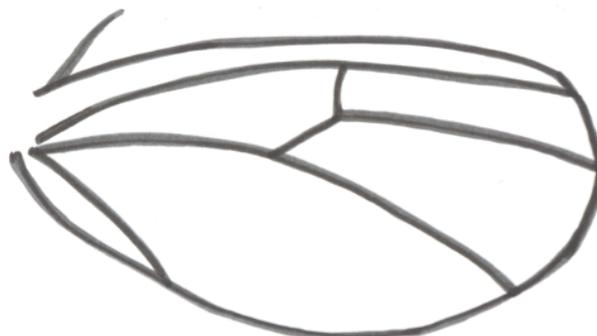


Figure 1. Hindwing venation of *Ceryx mirabilis*.

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Image 1. *Ceryx mirabilis* holotype (1-TS-2009) above, paratype female (2-TS-2009) below.

collar to ultimate abdominal segment; abdominal segments fringed with yellow between these lines; abdomen with a yellow ventral line.

Forewing *recto* hyaline; costa narrowly black, leaving a hyaline streak between it and the upper vein of the cell extending from the base to discocellulars; veins black; broad black bar on discocellulars; margin narrowly black from termen to vein 3, widening above that so that the entire area beyond the discocellulars and above vein 4 is black, except for a small subapical hyaline patch.

Hindwing with only two veins arising from the hindwing cell apart from Rs; *recto* surface hyaline, costa and outer third of wing black.

Paratypes: Female differs from the male in the following points: antennae simple, the collar yellow; forewing *recto* broader, with reduced black area on outer half, the marginal black area connected to the discocellular bar by a narrow black bar along vein 5; subapical transparent patch large and quadrate.

Habitat

The type material was recorded on the roadside in the upper part of the village of Shyamkhet between Bhowali and Ramgarh. Both pairs were recorded within a kilometer of each other. Although roadside swards in the area are typically degraded during other seasons, during the monsoon months they support lush vegetation, especially stinging nettles (*Urtica* and *Girardinia*), dock (*Rumex*) and other herbs. Forests at the edge of the village consist mostly of Chir Pine (*Pinus roxburghii*) and Himalayan Oak (*Quercus* spp.).



Image 2. *Ceryx mirabilis* holotype (1-TS-2009; left) and female paratype (2-TS-2009; right) *in copula*; holotype bears an insect parasite on proximal part of abdomen.

Remarks

The minutely serrate antennae of the male preclude *mirabilis* from being placed under the S.E. Asian *Auriculoceryx* Holloway. The unusual abdominal markings immediately distinguish this species from other members of the genus. Drs. Ian Kitching and Martin Honey kindly compared photos of the type of *mirabilis* with material in the collection of the Natural History Museum, London and ascertained that there is nothing similar there.

Both the pairs comprising the type series were taken *in copula*, settled on low growing plants. No other individuals of this species were seen. It is on the wing briefly towards the end of the southwest Monsoon and so far has only been recorded from the village of Shyamkhet, although nearby localities at similar elevation in the same mountain range (eg. Nainital 1800-2200 m, Bhowali 1700-1750 m, etc.) have been surveyed often over a period of many years. It has not been recorded at artificial light, although the closely related *Syntomoides imaon* Cramer is frequently recorded at light at lower elevation in the area (Bhimtal valley).

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