

Bugs R All

Newsletter of the
Invertebrate Conservation & Information Network of South Asia (ICINSA)

Kaiser-i-Hind sighted at Darjeeling Hill of West Bengal, India



Kaiser-i-Hind
Teinopalpus imperialis
photographed at
Tiger Hill in Darjeeling
District of West
Bengal, India.
© Asim Giri.

This note represents the first published photographic record of the elusive Kaiser-i-Hind *Teinopalpus imperialis* from Darjeeling District of West Bengal, India.

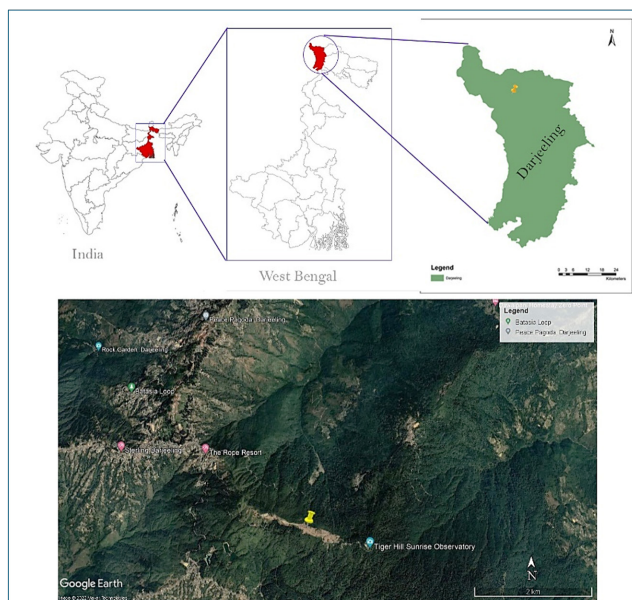
Teinopalpus imperialis (Hope, 1843) is a very beautiful rich green coloured swallowtail butterfly. This rare and elusive butterfly has three subspecies: *T.i. imperialis* (Hope 1843), found in Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya; *T.i. himalaicus* (Rothschild 1898), found in Arunachal Pradesh Sikkim, West Bengal; *T.i. imperatrix* (de Nicéville 1899) found in northern Myanmar southwards to Ataran River (Varshney & Smetacek 2015), southern China, Vietnam

and Laos (Inayoshi 2012) from middle to higher altitudes (1,800–3,000 m) in the wooded mountains (Soibam 2016).

This beautiful butterfly was photographed at 26.9970 N, 88.2767 E while I was watching birds with a group on a jungle trail towards Tiger Hill on 07 August 2022. The area was dominated by Malingo bamboos along with Pine (*Pinus*), Oak (*Quercus*) and thorny bushes. It was a pleasant, clear morning and the time was around 0900 h. Suddenly, I saw a very interesting butterfly flying around over us with other butterflies. Then I tracked it for about half an hour. When it had settled down on a bamboo twig (facing

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Location where Kaiser-i-Hind *Teinopalpus imperialis* was photographed at Tiger Hill in Darjeeling District of West Bengal, India. Google Earth.

northeast), I was able to take a few photographs using my Nikon Coolpix B700. This butterfly was easily identified from the unique identifying keys and plates (Evans 1932; Kehimkar 2008; Wynter-Blyth 2009). I encountered this butterfly twice on that same day. The first one was observed about 300 m behind this photographed one. So, it is quite possible that there could be two butterflies present on that day.

There are also few recent records of this species from Darjeeling, either without photographs or publication (Mnauky 2008; Rai 2022). Its global population is 'Near Threatened' according to IUCN Red List (Dixon 1996). It is also a protected species under the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act (1972), Schedule-II and now, it is the state butterfly of Arunachal Pradesh (The Hindu 2021).

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