

Bugs & All

Invertebrate Conservation & Information Network of South-Asia (ICINSA)

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

Rare sighting of Orange Awlet recorded in Pachamalai Hills of Eastern Ghats, India

Introduction

Butterflies are one of the most fascinating insect groups and they have been considered as indicators of the health of an ecosystem. Changes in abundance and distribution of butterflies have been linked to a range of factors, including habitat loss and fragmentation, land use, and climate changes (Thomas et al. 1998).

Butterflies are the pollinators, and they play a major role in the food chain, being prey for birds, reptiles, spiders, and predatory insects (Thangapandian et al. 2014). India has 1,800 species and subspecies of butterflies (Kunte et al. 2015) of which peninsular India hosts 350 species, and 331 species are found in the Western Ghats (Kunte 2000).

The Orange Awlet comes under the family Hesperidae



Orange Awlet attracted to the bird droppings. © R. Santhosini.

and have powerful skipping flights. They fly straight and hover at leaves. The Orange Awlet consists of three subspecies of which *Burara jaina fergusonii* (de Nicéville, 1894) ranges from southwestern India to northern Maharashtra (Dash et al. 2020; Saji et al. 2021). The identifying characteristics of the species as described by Kehimkar (2016) & Bhakare & Ogale (2018) as: the wings span of this species is 60–70 mm.

Underside brown with orange cilia on legs, body, hindwing termen and base. Black spot at the base of both wings. A prominent basal costal orange streak. The male upper forewing band is composed of a black spot before mid-vein 2 and a smaller separate spot above it. The species is active at dusk when males are territorial, patrolling small areas close to the ground. During the daytime, both sexes visit flowers but are

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Orange Awlet habitat from Mamarathu Solai from Solamathi Village in Pachamalai Hills. © T. Siva.

active only in thick shade.

Attracted to bird droppings and wet mossy rocks.

Females are often spotted hovering near the host plant.

Always rest below the leaf with closed wings. It prefers

dense evergreen forests in regions of heavy rainfall at low elevation. The Orange

Awlet is a forest insect

and never found on plains

(Kehimkar 2016; Bhakare & Ogale 2018). The previous

records of this Orange Awlet

Burara jaina fergusonii were

found in Western Ghats of

Tamil Nadu from Nilgiris,

Coimbatore, Virudhunagar

Districts and Tiruvannamalai

District of Jawadhu Hills from Eastern Ghats (Saji et al. 2021).

Sighted at Pachamalai Hills of Eastern Ghats at Tiruchirappalli District

The present note is to report the occurrence of Orange Awlet for the first time from the Pachmalai Hills of the Eastern Ghats in Tiruchirappalli District. We went to observe birds and butterflies in Pachamalai Hills from Top Sengattupatti Village on 18–19 September 2021. On 19 September 2021, a bird and butterfly survey was carried out

at Mamarathu Solai in Solamathi Village (11.291998 N, 78.621621 E. 796 m).

The butterfly was firstly sighted on the ground sitting on the bird droppings. As we just crossed the place the butterfly suddenly flew fast.

It was then that we realized the species belongs to the

Hesperiidae family. After

waiting for few minutes, we

again observed the butterfly

sitting on the bird droppings

and on closer observation we

identified it as Orange Awlet.

The habitat was shaded by

a high canopy cover and the

ground had moisture in the

place. It was photographed

by the second author on 19

September 2021 at 0803

h using SLR camera B600

Nikon. During that time, we

observed only one individual.

The present report is the first

photographic record of the

butterfly from the Eastern

Ghats part of Pachamalai

Hills. There are no scientific

information, reports, and

articles on this species from

the Eastern Ghats.

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