

# Bugs R All

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

## Observation of the Asian Orb-weaving Spider from India

The oriental spider genus *Talthybia* was erected by Thorell in 1898 with *T. depressa* Thorell, 1898 as its type. *T. depressa* was originally described based on an immature male specimen, and later the genus was rediagnosed after 111 years since its original description along with the description of its first representative female individual by Han et al. (2009). The genus is monotypic (Han et al. 2009) consisting of a single nominal species, viz., *T. depressa* reported from China, Myanmar, and the Philippines (World Spider Catalog 2021). Importantly, the genus *Talthybia* has not been sighted in India so far and this would be the first record from India.

Field work was carried out in Ultapani Forest Range of Chirang Reserve Forest (26.770 N, 90.289 E), Kokrajhar District, located in the western part of Assam.



*Talthybia* cf. *depressa* mimicking the tree bark surface. © Paris Basumatary.



*Talthybia* cf. *depressa*, front view. © Paris Basumatary.



*Talthybia* cf. *depressa*, dorsal view. © Paris Basumatary.



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It mainly comprises of dense tropical semi-evergreen, tropical moist deciduous and riverine forest along with small patches of woodland and grassland (BirdLife International 2021). On 21 December 2020, at 1030 h, we sighted a small rounded object moving sluggishly on a tree twig, and upon closer observation we were awestruck to see a spider wrapped around the twig and resting motionlessly at a height of over 1.7 m above the ground. We captured in situ photos of the individual in its natural habitat. The spider was later recognized to be of the genus *Talithybia* after comparing the photographs with online resources and taxonomic literature (Bay 2020; World Spider Catalog 2021; Han et al. 2009).

The female of *T. cf. depressa* is a medium sized orb weaver, dull whitish-brown coloured with greenish pigmentation. The body is roundish, flattened dorso-ventrally and is densely covered with whitish-black setae. Carapace with a pair of blackish chevron markings at mid of caput and fovea. Abdomen elliptical with conical shaped projection posteriorly; dorsum with numerous dark brownish orbital spots and pleated at both the lateral sides and a pair of tubercles seen at mid edges. The dorsum of abdomen is seen with greenish colour algal like deposition, which lets it blend superbly with the surface characteristics of the tree.

The previous records of *T. depressa* are from Myanmar, Yunnan in China, and

Philippines (World Spider Catalog 2021), and its occurrence in India represents the westernmost record of its entire range.

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