

Bugs & All

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

First record of variable Tawny Rajah from Purulia, West Bengal, India

The butterfly Variable Tawny Rajah *Charaxes bernardus hierax* has a localized distribution with records from Meghalaya, Assam, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Nagaland, Sikkim, Odisha, Chattishgarh, and northern most part of West Bengal (Kunte et al. 2021).

Variable Tawny Rajah, a butterfly usually reported from low elevation can fly up to 1,500 m. They are mainly confined to forests. They never visit flowers and depend mainly on animal dung, urine, dead crabs and overripe fruits (Kehimkar 2016).

The butterfly commonly called Tawny Rajah (brush-footed butterflies) belongs to subfamily Charaxinae under the family Nymphalidae.

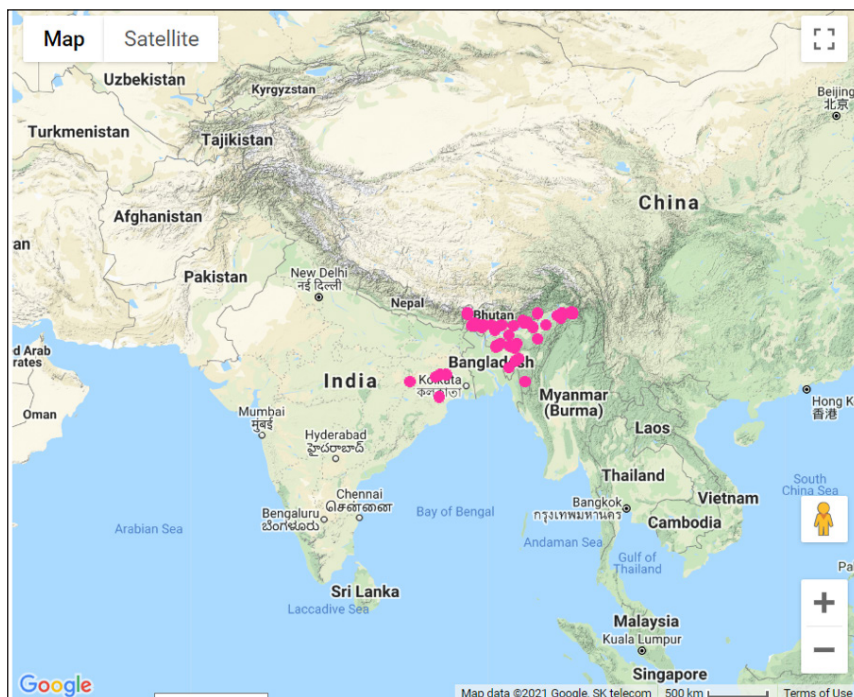
The species *Charaxes bernardus* was first reported



Variable Tawny Rajah photographed from Garh Panchkot Hills, Purulia, West Bengal.

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Distribution of Variable Tawny Rajah in the Indian subcontinent including the present report from Purulia, West Bengal. Captured on 8 August 2020 from the Butterflies of India website.

by Fabricius (1793). Later, Felder and Felder (1867) first reported the subspecies *Charaxes bernardus hierax*. The Himalayan subspecies/synonym is legally protected in India under the Schedule II of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (Das et al. 2018; Kunte et al. 2021).

During the field survey on 8 August 2020, one specimen of *Charaxes Bernardus hierax* was recorded from Garh

Panchkot Hill area located in Purulia District of southern part of West Bengal. The specimen was not captured and thus not collected.

The butterfly was photographed using Nikon Coolpix P600. The female butterfly specimen was identified on the basis of chestnut colour and presence of broad white bands on the underside of the wings, the terminal black border of the

forewing traversed inwardly by a row of yellowish-white lunules (Evans 1932; Wynter-Blyth 1957; Kehimkar 2016). The image was uploaded in Butterflies of India website with media code fa300. The coordinates (86.752E & 23.614N) from where the specimen was found in puddling belongs to the area of Chota Nagpur Plateau.

Based on present observation, the updated geographic distribution of *Charaxes Bernardus hierax* ranges from central India (Chattisgarh), eastern India (northern part of West Bengal, Odisha) and northeastern India (Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Nagaland, Sikkim).

Apart from the northern most part of West Bengal that is actually the foot hills of the Himalaya, the specimen is also being reported for the first time in writing from southern part of West Bengal in a different ecoregion that

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is important for selection of conservation strategy for this species (Das 2018).

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