

Parasitic fungus *Ophiocordyceps melolonthae* in the forest fringed area of Fambonglho Wildlife Sanctuary, Sikkim

The study in the sub-temperate and temperate forest of Fambonglho Wildlife Sanctuary, East Sikkim was conducted and a unique species was encountered. The moist and shady location excavated unravelled the fungus that was identified as *Ophiocordyceps melolonthae* (Tul. & C.Tul.) G.H.Sung, J.M.Sung, Hywel-Jones & Spatafora. This species has distinct characters. Its stroma originated from lateral side of abdomen of host and has a distinct tough, light yellow fibrous stipe and a fertile part, clavate of 10–30 mm long. This is a novel taxon of Sikkim that was found growing under the forest litter in moist black soil. This species is also reported in Costa Rica, Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela etc (Zha et al. 2021).

The collected sample *Ophiocordyceps melolonthae* was examined in HARC-QCL Laboratory, FED and found that it infected *Hyphantria cunea*'s larva, although the



Ophiocordyceps melolonthae in the forest fringed area of Fambonglho Wildlife Sanctuary, Sikkim. © Durga.

latter is regarded as one of the crop damaging species (Yang et al. 2006; Celar & Kos 2012; Greenfield et al. 2016 Wang et al. 2019).

Taxonomy

Ophiocordyceps melolonthae (Tul. & C.Tul.) G.H.Sung, J.M.Sung, Hywel-Jones & Spatafora

Family: Ophiocordycipitaceae

Altitude: 1,677 m

GPS: 27.275N; 88.4894E

Location: Thangsing, Forest

Fringed areas of Fambonglho Wildlife Sanctuary, east Sikkim
Coll.: D.K. Pradhan

Photographed on: 3 May 2013

Host: *Hyphantria cunea* Drury

Habitat: Under shady rocky crevices in sub-temperate and temperate regions (1,500–2,000 m).

Descriptions

Stroma originates from abdominal region of larva of the host but not from the larval head. Stroma have distinct tough, light yellow fibrous stipe

of 50–55 mm long and 3–4 mm thickness that bears fertile part, clavate of 10–30 mm long and 3–5 mm thickness. The tapered, light pale-yellow fertile area has superficial, crowded and loosely immersed perithecia.

Note: Comparing the characters, it indicated that the specimen was *Ophiocordyceps melolonthae* (Zha et al. 2021).

References

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