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First report of the Black and Golden Cicada *Huechys fusca* from India in Manas National Park, Assam

Abstract: A rare Black and Golden Cicada, *Huechys fusca* Distant 1892 was observed in Manas National Park, Assam, India, during a field survey. This sighting highlights the region's biodiversity and underscores the need for ongoing conservation efforts to protect the park's diverse ecosystems and endangered species.

Keywords: Black and golden cicada, Conservation, Manas National Park

Running Title: First report of *Huechys fusca* from India

The cicadas (Hemiptera: Cicadidae) of the Indian subcontinent have received little attention since the early 20th Century like the other insects in the area (Price et al. 2016). Cicadidae is the largest family of cicadas, comprising around 3,000 species, with roughly 204 of these species native to India (Sarkar 2024). The genus *Huechys* comprises 24 living species of cicadas. One species, *Huechys fusca* Distant 1892 is found in most southeastern Asian countries. It has been recorded in Sumatra, the Malay Peninsula (including Singapore), and Borneo (Leong et al. 2011). Among the 24 species of the *Huechys* genus, five species are recorded in

India, Bangladesh, and Myanmar. These species include *H. beata* Chou, Lei, Li, Lu & Yao 1997, *H. haematica* Distant 1888, *H. testacea testacea* (Fabricius 1787), *H. sanguinea sanguinea* (De Geer 1773), and *H. thoracica* Distant 1879. Moreover, among these five species, *H. beata* Chou et al. 1997, *H. sanguinea sanguinea* (De Geer 1773), and *H. thoracica* (Distant 1879) have been recorded from Assam.

It is important to note that this reference to Assam pertains to the region as it existed during the British colonial period, which may differ from the present-day Indian state of Assam (Price et al. 2016). Despite its occurrence in neighbouring countries, *Huechys fusca* has not been recorded from India until now.

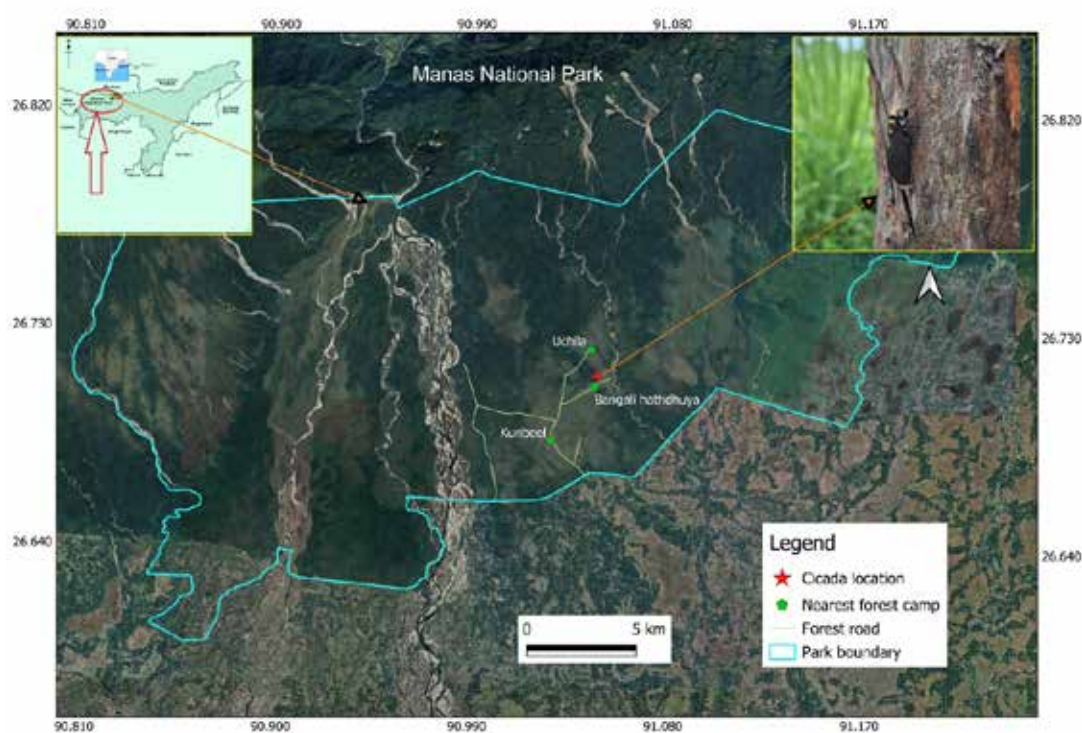
The cicada diversity of Assam remains inadequately studied, and this report represents the first confirmed record of *H. fusca* from India, significantly extending the distribution range of the species. The specimen was observed in Manas National Park (MNP) a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Tiger Reserve and Biosphere Reserve within the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) of Assam. Characterized by a mosaic of forests, grasslands and aquatic habitats and MNP harbours a remarkable diversity of rare,



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The Black and Golden Cicada *Huechys fusca* Distant 1892 observed on a girdled Okshi Tree *Dillenia pentagyna* in the Bansbari Range of Manas National Park.



Sighting location of the Black and Golden Cicada in Manas National Park.



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threatened and endemic species making it an important region for biodiversity conservation. MNP (26°35′-26°50′N, 90°45′-91°15′E) serves as the core area of the Manas Biosphere Reserve, covering 500 km² within the Baksa and Chirang districts of the BTR. The park is divided into three ranges: Bansbari (central), Bhuyanpara (eastern), and Panbari (western).

Manas National Park's forests are classified into six types: sub-Himalayan high alluvial semi evergreen forests, eastern Bhabhar sal type forests, eastern Himalayan moist mixed deciduous forests, low alluvial savannah woodlands, Assam Valley semi evergreen forests, and eastern wet alluvial grassland, each with distinct flora and characteristics (Champion & Seth 1968). On 20 May 2024, during a field survey near the Bangale hat-dhuwa forest camp (26.70718° N, 91.04639° E) in the Bansbari range of MNP, we had an extraordinary encounter. At approximately 1050 h, under a clear and sunny sky, we observed a cicada (26.71151° N, 91.04753° E) perched on a girdling of an Okshi Tree *Dillenia pentagyna*.

This remarkable sighting lasted for about a minute before the cicada flew away. The cicada, identified as *Huechys fusca* Distant 1892 (black and golden cicada) by experts and documented in "A Monograph of Oriental Cicadidae" by W.L. Distant (1892), has distinct characteristics such as body and legs black; two large spots on mesonotum, either orange or pale yellow; abdomen dark orange-yellow, narrowly black at

base; tegmina pale fuscous; the venation, basal cell, and costal membrane blackish; wings very pale fuscous, semi-hyaline.

The pronotum is pale yellow, which is blackish in *Huechys sanguinea* (De Geer 1773); the striations to the face are coarse and profound; ommatidial colour is blackish in this species, whereas it is dark yellow in *H. sanguinea* (De Geer 1773) (Distant 1892). The forest in this part of the park is characterized by a low alluvial savannah woodland, supporting a rich and diverse vegetation cover. The habitat is dominated primarily by grass species, followed by tree species. The site is characterized by the herbaceous layer dominated by *Saccharum narenga*, *Imperata cylindrica*, *Apluda mutica*, *Ophiuros exaltatus*, *Eulalia fastigiata*, *Arundinella nepalensis* and *Costus speciosus* and tree associates including *Dillenia pentagyna*, *Careya arborea*, *Sterculia villosa*, *Bombax ceiba*, *Gmelina arborea*, *Lagerstroemia parviflora*, *Oroxylum indicum*, *Callicarpa arborea*, *Duabanga grandiflora*, and *Litsea salicifolia* (Champion & Seth 1968).

This record is particularly significant as it sheds light on the habitat preferences and natural history of the elusive black and golden cicada, *Huechys fusca*, within the Manas National Park, an important biodiversity hotspot. The diverse flora of this region supports a rich and complex ecosystem, vital for the survival of a wide range of wildlife, including this rare cicada. Such observations underscore the importance



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of continued conservation efforts in the park to protect these habitats. Continued protection of this habitat and its endangered species are essential for maintaining the biodiversity of Manas National Park, highlighting the need for sustained ecological stewardship.

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