

**A NOTE ON THE OCCURANCE OF
COMMON ALBATROSS, *APIAS ALBINA*
(BOISDUVAL) (LEPIDOPTERA: PIERIDAE)
AT THE ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE CAMPUS,
KOZHIKODE DISTRICT, KERALA**

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The common Albatross *Appias albina* (Boisduval) is a resident of evergreen and semievergreen forests (Wynter-Blyth, 1957; Kunte, 2000; Larsen, 1987a). It is also well known for its migratory habit (Home, 1935; Williams, 1938; Wynter-Blyth, 1957; Larsen, 1978, 1987a,b; Kunte, 2000)

Palot *et al.* (2002) reported migration of butterflies starting from Coorg in Karnataka and passing through Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary in Kerala. Mathew and Binoy (2002) further reported migration of butterflies at the New Amarambalam Reserve Forest in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. Palot (pers. comm.) is of the opinion that from November to January there is a movement of butterflies from Coorg to Nilgiris via Aralam, Kottiyoor, Wayanad, New Amarambalam and Silent Valley. These reports confirm the dominance of Common Albatross in migratory flights.

The St. Joseph's College campus is situated on a hill opposite to the Medical College, Kozhikode and is 6km away from the heart of Kozhikode city, which is along the Malabar coast. It has a small botanical garden and paddy fields and rubber plantations surrounding the campus. The present observations were made during a study on the diversity of lepidopterans in the campus.

On 7 November 2002 while observing the butterflies at the botanical garden of the college, it was found that a female Common Albatross butterfly was fluttering in the garden and it appeared to be searching for host plants for oviposition. The butterfly was collected after several attempts. Later, on 10 November, another female Common Albatross butterfly was also found in the garden.

The occurrence of Common Albatross has been confirmed in various parts of Kozhikode district by butterfly watchers. Later I could confirm its occurrence in some parts of Koyilandy which is near Kozhikode. There are also unconfirmed reports on the breeding of Common Albatross in various parts of Kozhikode district, possibly utilizing plants belonging to *Capparaceae*. During the migratory flights some Common Albatross might have deviated from the path and reached the campus searching for food plants.

The cause of migration of butterflies is not still fully known.

Ford (1990) is of the opinion that the stimulation to migrate could be due to population outbreaks leading to depletion of host plants. Gilbert and Singer (1975) have also pointed out the availability of larval as well as adult food resources as a limiting factor in the mass occurrence and migration of butterflies. Mathew and Binoy (2002) reported population outbreaks of Plain Puffin breeding on *Drypetes oblongifolia* during the migration studies at New Amarambalam and suggested it as a possible reason for migration. In all my observations on the occurrence of Common Albatross at Koyilandy and also in the present case (Devagiri campus) the butterflies were searching for plants for oviposition. Also all the cases of sighting of these butterflies at unusual sites occurred during migratory periods.

During the migratory flights at Aralam sanctuary I observed Common Albatross ovipositing on *Drypetes oblongifolia* on the sides of the migratory path. All the previous observations and the present one again strengthens the opinion that migratory flights are due to population outbreaks leading to depletion of host plants.

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