



## Rediscovery of Small Salmon Arab *Colotis amata* Fabricius (Lepidoptera: Pieridae) from saline and semi-saline areas of West Bengal, India

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The Small Salmon Arab, *Colotis amata* (Fabricius 1775), is a widely distributed butterfly, recorded from Africa and Asia. In South Asia, it occurs in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. In India, the species has been reported from all parts, except the Northeast (Wynter-Blyth 1957). The larval host plants are *Salvadora oleoides*, *S. persica* and *Azima tetraacantha* (Salvadoraceae) (Wynter-Blyth 1957). In this article we report the occurrence of *Colotis amata* (Fabricius 1775) after 70 years in the saline areas of West Bengal.

### Observations

The species was observed in thorny scrub jungles in three different parts of coastal West Bengal during the post-monsoon months (October-December, 2008).

The first record was on 26 October in the coastal areas of Sagar Island (21°63'N & 88°08'E) in the Sundarbans region of South 24 Parganas district. A single male individual was first observed flying low over hedges along a roadside. Later it settled on a sunny patch of ground with wings open.

On 29 November, another specimen was recorded from a coastal scrub jungle in Haldia (22°03'N & 88°05'E), an industrial township in East Midnapur district. Here a few of them were dispersed. Males preferred sunny areas, while a couple of females were feeding on flowers. The third observation was on 7 December in Piyali (22°39'N & 88°48'E), an inland saline area, close to Canning in South 24 Parganas

district, which is cultivated area, with a few scattered patches of thorny scrub. While feeding, the females open their wings slowly and close them in a few seconds. Males, as observed on previous



**Image 1. Small Salmon Arab male showing upperside.** photographed in Piyali, 7 December 2008.



**Image 2. Small Salmon Arab male showing underside.** photographed in Piyali, 7 December 2008.



**Image 3. Small Salmon Arab female showing upperside.** photographed in Piyali, 7 December 2008.

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days, frequently settled on the ground with their wings open, particularly in sunlit patches. Both males and females are weak flyers and fly close to the ground.

### Discussion

Bingham (1907) described *C. amata*, along with its larval host plants and distribution. He pointed out the absence of this species from the Bengal Presidency. Although Evans (1932) did not specify its occurrence in Bengal, Talbot (1939) reported it from Bengal. However, no specific locality in Bengal was mentioned. Sanders (1944-45) recorded that it “Presumably occurs” but he has not taken it near Calcutta. Ghosh and Chaudhury (1997) did not record *C. amata* during their faunistic surveys of West Bengal. However, they reported the species as a part of the review from literature. *C. amata* has been recorded only from the coastal (Sagar Island and Haldia) and inland saline (Piyali) areas of West Bengal so far. The present finding confirms the occurrence of the species in the eastern part of the Indian sub-region as well. Although the species has been reported to be ‘common’ in the Indian sub-region (Wynter-Blyth 1957; Kehimkar 2008), we found it to be locally rare in the saline and semi-saline areas of West Bengal.

### Conclusion

Further studies will throw more light on the distribution

pattern, host preference, seasonal variations and the impact of agriculture (as in Piyali) or urbanisation (as in Sagar Island and Haldia) on *C. amata*.

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