

Sighting of *Aglais cashmirensis aesis* Fruhstorfer, 1912 (Nymphalidae) from Nagaland, India

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The butterflies of Nagaland are not well known. Some early studies of butterflies of the Naga Hills include the work of Tytler (1915). Subsequently, Tytler (1940) also published records of butterflies from neighbouring Burma. Here, I report the presence of *Aglais cashmirensis aesis* Fruhstorfer from Nagaland, extending its known range.

Since January 2011, I have been observing and photographing butterflies in and around Chizami (25°24'0"N & 94°24'0"E; 981m) in the Phek District of Nagaland, 88km from the state capital, Kohima. The observations were opportunistic. The butterflies were photographed using digital cameras. The butterflies were identified using Kehimkar (2008) and Evans (1932) and the images were confirmed by Sanjay Sondhi, Titli Trust, Dehradun. Amongst the species

that were identified was the Indian Tortoiseshell *Aglais cashmirensis aesis*.

Aglais cashmirensis aesis is the eastern subspecies of *Aglais cashmirensis* Kollar with a known distribution from Shimla (Himachal Pradesh) eastwards to western Arunachal Pradesh. *Aglais cashmirensis cashmirensis* is the western subspecies, which is known from Kulu (Himachal Pradesh) west to Pakistan.

Aglais cashmirensis aesis is a resident of Chizami and is well established throughout the area. The butterfly was photographed on 16 June 2011 (Image 1). It is on the wing throughout the year and has been recorded in all months from March to October. It has been noted mainly on exotic garden flowers in open spaces, basking on rocks, the ground, or on roadsides. It can be seen flying close to the ground and is seen mostly on sunny days. Its larval food plant, *Urtica* species (Nettles) grows abundantly in the area.

In recent literature, Kehimkar (2008) reported the easternmost distribution of *Aglais cashmirensis* as Sikkim. Haribal (1992) too, reported its presence in Sikkim. Older literature too, including Wynter-Blyth (1957) and Evans (1932), mention the easternmost distribution as Sikkim. More recently, Manari (2010) clarified that the range of *Aglais cashmirensis* actually extended further eastwards to Arunachal Pradesh and reported its presence in Rupa in western Arunachal Pradesh, noting that the presence of *Aglais cashmirensis* in that area had already been reported by Betts (1950) but had been overlooked by subsequent authors.

Publications on butterflies by Tytler (1915), whose work covered the Naga Hills and Manipur does not report this species from the area. In their report on the butterflies of the Khasi and Jaintia hills, Parson & Cantlie (1948) state, "Although there is no reason why this species should not be found on the high plateau, we know of no record".

In more recent butterfly surveys in northeastern India including the South Garo Hills, Meghalaya (Sanjay Sondhi pers. comm. 07 July 2011), Namdapha Tiger Reserve in eastern Arunachal Pradesh (unpublished checklist Sanjay Sondhi) and the Dibang Dihang Biosphere Reserve (Borang 2008) from the higher elevations of central Arunachal Pradesh, there



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Image 1. Indian Tortoiseshell *Aglais cashmirensis aesis* photographed on 16 June 2011 at Chizami Village, Nagaland

have been no records of *Aglais cashmirensis*.

Finally, there have been no records of this species from the neighboring countries of Bangladesh (Larsen 2004) and Myanmar (Tytler 1940; Kinyon 2004).

The record of *Aglais cashmirensis aesis* from Chizami, Phek District, Nagaland extends its known range significantly eastwards from western Arunachal Pradesh. It is, however, surprising that there have been no reported sightings of this butterfly from the area between there and Nagaland, specifically eastern Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.

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