

NEW RECORDS OF *ATHYMA WHITEI* TYTLER, 1940 (LEPIDOPTERA: NYMPHALIDAE: LIMENITIDINAE) FROM NORTHEASTERN INDIA: A RECENTLY REPORTED SPECIES FROM INDIA

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The Nymphalid butterfly Tytler's Sergeant *Athyma whitei* was first described from a single male specimen caught from Fort White, Chin Hills, western Myanmar (Tytler 1940). Since then, it has been known from Myanmar, northern Thailand, southern Vietnam, Hainan and China (Inayoshi 2012). The species is sighted from Fujian and Guangxi, China in recent literature (Lang 2012). The taxon was not reported from India until 2012. The sighting from Phura, Mara Autonomous District Council, southern Mizoram in northeastern India is the first record of the species within the political boundary of India (<http://www.ifoundbutterflies.org/144-athyma/athyma-whitei>).

This paper reports four more sighting of the species from India on the basis of one male photographed on 13 March 2013 from Lakhicerra Stream of North Cachar, southern Assam (24°58'20.20"N & 92°46'015"E) at an elevation of around 29m and subsequent record of the species in 11 December 2013 at an elevation of 46m just half kilometer away from the first sighting (Images 1–5). Two individuals were recorded during February and March respectively in nearby Sonapur area of E. Jaintia Hills, Meghalaya (R. Goswami pers. comm. 2013).

The species was seen mud-puddling on the wet

rocks of the stream during all the occasions. During the first record, the species was seen with open wing, closing for a minute or so and again with an open wing. The species was seen undertaking weak flights while mud-puddling. The same phenomenon recorded again, but the species was also seen settling on tree leaves and then disappearing in the bushes.

Tytler (1940) originally treated *A. whitei* as a subspecies of *A. zeroeca* from Chin Hills, differing considerably from *A. zeroeca* of Naga Hills and Manipur. *A. zeroeca* has a prominent pale band which is broader and edged broadly with greyish-blue colour, while the underside forewing has two very narrow apical spots, and there are three dark vertical lines connecting this area with the lower edge of the cell. However, in the specimens of *A. zeroeca* encountered by the author, the apical spots are very narrow like *A. whitei* or sullied. The Thailand specimens appear to have broad apical spots (<http://yutaka.it-n.jp/lim1/720640050.html>). The white discal band of *A. zeroeca* is also very variable in northeastern India, sometimes very narrow but sometimes a little broader, but not very broad as that of *A. whitei*. The female of the species is not yet described.

However, it is still unclear whether *A. whitei* is a good species or a hybrid. Recently, it has been treated as a distinct species (Kunte & Saito 2013). *A. whitei* has three dark vertical lines in the lower edge of cell in the underside of forewing but these lines are absent in *A. zeroeca*. *A. selenophora* also has three dark lines in both upper and lower edge of cell and are visible from upperside also but not so in case of *A. whitei*. Therefore, it is not a subspecies of *A. zeroeca*. However,



ISSN
Online 0974–7907
Print 0974–7893

OPEN ACCESS

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.11609/JoTT.o3629.6287-9> | **ZooBank:** urn:lsid:zoobank.org:pub:2C6A54A5-D11C-41B7-9B81-D9D91D9C1FE0

Editor: Saito Motoki, The Butterfly Society of Japan, Tokyo, Japan.

Date of publication: 26 August 2014 (online & print)

Manuscript details: Ms # o3629 | Received 20 May 2013 | Final received 08 August 2014 | Finally accepted 10 August 2014

Citation: Gogoi, M.J. (2014). New records of *Athyma whitei* Tytler, 1940 (Lepidoptera: Nymphalidae: Limenitidinae) from northeastern India: a recently reported species from India. *Journal of Threatened Taxa* 6(9): 6287–6289; <http://dx.doi.org/10.11609/JoTT.o3629.6287-9>

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Funding: The work was a part of Aaranyak seed grant for nature conservation.

Competing Interest: The author declare no competing interests.

Acknowledgements: The author thanks Aranyak Seed grant programme for nature conservation. The author also thanks the local community for logistic support.



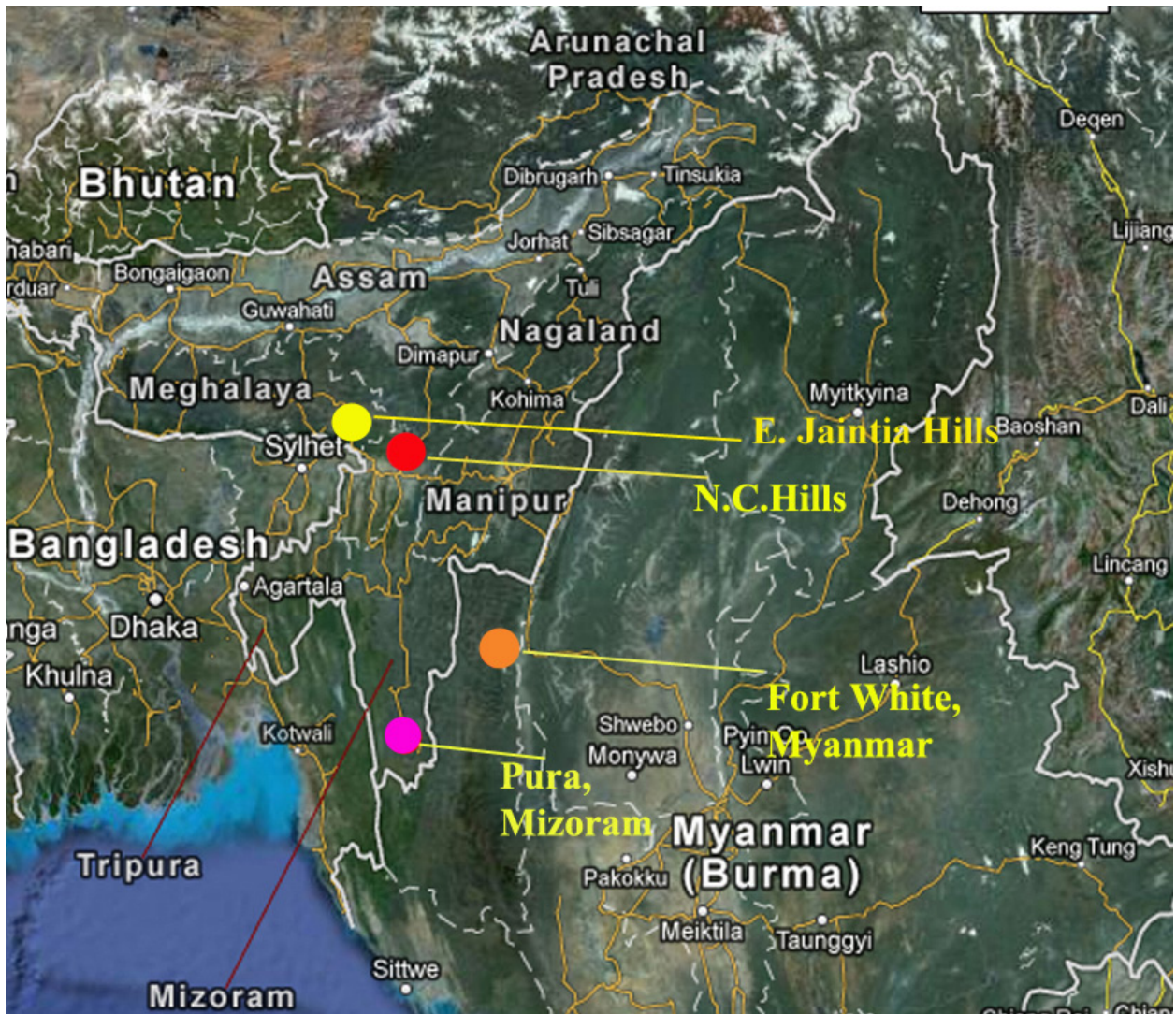


Image 1. Map showing the sighting of *Athyma whitei* from Chin-type locality (orange dot) Myanmar; Pura, Mizoram-past record (pink dot) and E. jaintia (yellow dot) Cachar, Assam-new record (red dot).



Image 2. *Athyma whitei*, N.C. Hills, 13 March 2013, up

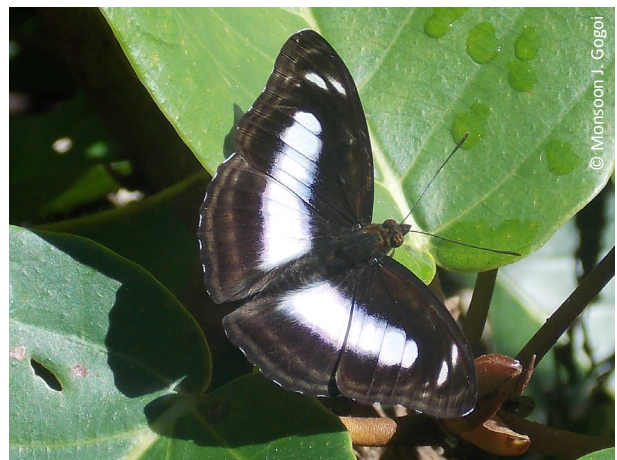


Image 3. *Athyma whitei*, N.C. Hills, 11 December 2013, up



Image 4. *Athyma whitei*, N.C. Hills, 11 December 2013



Image 5. *Athyma whitei*, N.C. Hills, underside, 13 March 2013



Image 6. *Athyma zeroa*, Dampa TR, Mizoram, 18 October 2013, un



Image 7. *Athyma zeroa*, broad banded form, Mishmi Hills, 10 March 2011, up



Image 8. *Athyma zeroa*, narrow banded form, N.C. Hills, 10 December 2012, up



Image 9. *Athyma selenophora* (male) (Jeypore-Dehing, upper Assam, 08 February 2010, up

Inayoshi (2012) suggests that it could be a hybrid between *selenophora* and *zeroa* or even a distinct species (Inayoshi 2012) (Images 6–9). The species also undergoes seasonal variation (Shizuya et al. 2011). In northeastern India, the occurrence of *A. whitei* was not surprising in southern Mizoram as the record is only 137km away from Fort White, Myanmar, where the taxon was originally described. However, the new records from N.C. Hills are approximately 223km away from the type locality and hence quite significant and this record gives an insight into the distribution range and habitat of this rare taxon in northeastern India. And since the species occur in N.C. Hills, it could be found in E. Jaintia Hills since these are adjacent areas.

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