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Rediscovery of Common Tinsel *Catapaecilma major* Druce, 1895 (Lepidoptera, Lycaenidae) from the Garhwal region of Uttarakhand, India

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ABSTRACT: During a butterfly survey in the remote village of Gailung in Chamoli district, Uttarakhand, one Common Tinsel was recorded on 27th March 2023. The butterfly was photographed and identified with the help of field guides as *Catapaecilma major* Druce, 1895 (Lepidoptera, Lycaenidae). The habitat was adjacent to local terrace farmland and was dominated by plants such as *Ageratum conyzoides*, *Oxalis* sp., *Urtica* sp., *Fluggea virosa*, and *Bauhinia variegata*. The butterfly was observed resting on the leaves of *Ageratina adenophora.* and was noted for its swift flight. The current communication highlights the first observation of Common Tinsel from the Garhwal Himalaya after 1930s.
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KEY WORDS: Butterfly, Lycaenidae, Garhwal Himalaya, Kumaon

Common Tinsel *Catapaecilma major* is a lycaenid butterfly with a known distribution in India, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Southeast Asia. In India, it is found in Western Ghats (Maharashtra southwards), Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Northeastern India (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland), Sikkim, and Uttarakhand (Wynter-Blyth, 1957; Kehimkar, 2008; Gasse, 2013; Anonymous, 2023). It has two subspecies in India viz., *Catapaecilma major major* Druce, 1895 and *C. m. callone* Fruhstorfer, 1915 (Sondhi and Kunte, 2018; Anonymous, 2023; Savela, 2023) whereas some authors also consider a third subspecies *i.e., C. m. anais* Fruhstorfer, 1915 (Gasse, 2013; Varshney and Smatecek, 2015). Morphologically, its features include three tails and brownish-yellow underside with silver- black edged ochreous bands, and pale violet blue upperside in female, whereas dark violet blue in male. It has a wingspan of 28-32 mm, and altitudinal ranges of up to 1,700m (Evans, 1932; Wynter-Blyth, 1957; Kehimkar, 2008; Sondhi and Kunte, 2018). The current communication highlights the first observation of Common Tinsel from the Garhwal Himalaya after 1930s.

During a butterfly survey in the remote village of Gailung in Chamoli district, Uttarakhand, one individual of Common Tinsel was recorded on 27th March 2023 at 1544hrs (30.3195° N; 79.1506° E; Alt: 856m). The butterfly was photographed and identified with the help of field guides (Kehimkar, 2008; Sondhi and Kunte, 2018). The habitat was adjacent to local terrace farmland and was dominated by plants such as *Ageratum conyzoides*, *Oxalis* sp., *Urtica* sp., *Fluggea virosa*, and *Bauhinia variegata*. The butterfly was observed

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Figs. 1a, b - Common Tinsel photographed at the site

resting on the leaves of *Ageratina adenophora.* and was noted for its swift flight, however, to my surprise, it perched on the lens hood of my camera. Following a brief flight of 10-15 seconds, the butterfly returned to its original location and was seen crawling on the leaves (Figs. 1a, b). Two individuals of hill jezebel *Delias bellandona,* along with some birds such as verditer flycatcher *Eumyias thalassinus*, purple sunbird *Cinnyris asiaticus* and black bulbul *Hypsipetes leucocephalus* were also sighted in and around the same habitat. The following day, on 28th March 2023 at 1100 hrs, a search conducted at the same location failed to yield any sightings of the species.

The larval host plants are *Terminalia arjuna, Terminalia paniculata, Mallotus nudiflorus*, *Lagerstroemia parviflora*, and *Ziziphus rugosa* (Davidson *et al*. 1896; Bell, 1919; Wynter-Blyth, 1957; Nitin *et al*., 2018). None of the aforementioned species of larval host plants were seen in the area.

There have been quite a few studies from Garhwal on the exploration of the butterfly fauna, including the earliest studies by McKinnon and DeNiceville (1899), and Ollenbach (1930). They reported the sighting of this species from Mussoorie and Dehradun. One of the most comprehensive studies was done by Singh and Sondhi (2016) where a checklist comprising 407 species was presented, which included directly recorded 349 species of butterflies from this region. However, no sightings of common tinsel were reported. It was only in 2019 that Kumar *et al.* discovered the presence of this butterfly in the Kumaon region. Finding presented in this article is noteworthy as it marks the first recorded sighting of this butterfly in the Garhwal region in 90 years.

In the recent past, owing to the extensive surveys conducted by the researchers and naturalists, various rediscoveries and addition to the butterflies of Uttarakhand came from Garhwal Himalaya, including Apefly *Spalgis epeus epeus*, Pale Jezebel *Delias sanaca sanaca*, Variegated Plushblue *Flos adriana*, Dark Sapphire *Heliophorus indicus,* Mountain Tortoiseshell *Aglais rizana,* Small Silverfork *Lethe jalaurida,* White-Ringed Meadowbrown *Hyponephele davendra davendra*, Dubious Five-Ring *Ypthima parasakra* (Singh, 2016; Sondhi, 2016; Venkatesh, 2016; Singh and Seal, 2019; Bhatt *et al.,* 2020; Kumar *et al.*, 2020; Singh and Singh, 2019, 2021, 2022). These records indicate that the Garhwal Himalaya region contains unexplored areas with significant potential for studying butterfly diversity and ecology. Further research is crucial to assess the status of butterflies in the Garhwal Himalaya, especially considering that many of them lack recent records.

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