

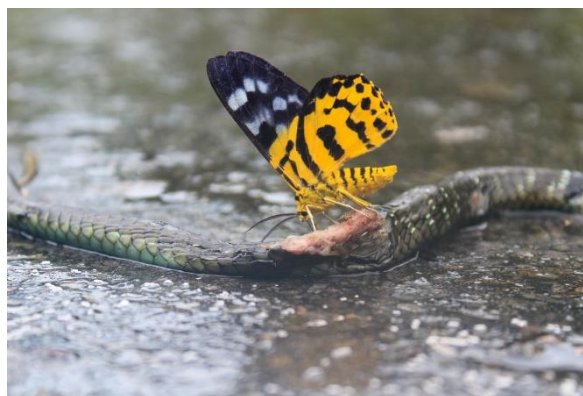
Pharmacophagy in false tiger moth: An incidental observation at Meghalaya, India

Laxmisha K M and Ramesh K B

The false tiger moth, *Dysphania militaris* L. (Geometridae: Lepidoptera) is a species of moth found in tropical regions of South and Southeast Asia countries such as India, China, Myanmar and Indonesia. Carl Linnaeus described it for the first time in the 10th edition of *Systema Naturae* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dysphania_militaris). In India, it has been reported to be distributed in Tripura, Nagaland, Assam, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Sikkim, West Bengal, and Uttarakhand. *D.militaris* is a day-flying moth that usually feeds on flower nectar and moist patches (Veino and Rakoveine, 2022).

Many terrestrial herbivores are anticipated to crave sodium due to the low sodium content of land plants on which they feed. Mineral reserves accumulated during the larval phase of lepidopteran caterpillars may often be limited and for this reason, there must be a strong selection in the adult Lepidoptera in terms of evolutionary strategies to replenish mineral stocks. Adult Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths) of many species are reported to visit frequently and suck water and nutrients from moist ground, perspiration, tears, feces, or animal carcasses,

a behavior known as mud-puddling which is much similar to one such sexually selected behavioral repertoire called pharmacophagy. Pharmacophagy is a mechanism of feeding on various nutritional sources other than regular hosts to acquire beneficial chemicals rather than for nutrition. It is a sexually selected behavior where toxic plant metabolites that serve as pheromone precursors and nuptial gifts by male butterflies are collected (Beck et al. 1999). Males in most lepidopterans provide specialized spermatophores to their mates (Drummond, 1984), which include minerals like sodium (Eisner and Meinwald, 1996) or calcium phosphate (Lai-Fook, 1991), toxic secondary plant metabolites (Schneider, 1993), or nutrition like amino acids (Gilbert, 1979).



The author has photographed the puddling rather pharmacophagy of *D. militaris* adult along a stretch of forest road in Meghalaya (25.2597 N, 92.2001 E). The adult moth was feeding by inserting its proboscis into the wounded or degloved body part of the dead snake for more than 20-25 minutes. The snake died from a vehicle hit on the center of the road. The wound caused by the wheel passing on the snake's body ripped up the skin and where exactly the single *D. militaris* moth spotted to feed by inserting its proboscis. One such comparable observation made by Ray et al. (2021) where, *D. militaris* spotted the various food resources on the road, namely elephant dung, carnivore scats, and road-kills of reptiles, amphibians, crustaceans on the roads near Dehing-Patkai National Park, Assam.

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AUTHORS

Laxmisha K M* (Corresponding author)
and Ramesh K B

Division of Entomology, ICAR-Indian
Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi,
India

E-mail: lakshmieshakm@gmail.com
