

A note on the migration of Dark Cerulean *Jamides bochus* (Stoll) (Lepidoptera: Lycaenidae) in Eravikulam National Park, Idukki District, Kerala, India

Muhamed Jafer Palot

Western Ghat Regional Centre, Zoological Survey of India,
Kozhikode, Kerala 673006, India
Email: palot.zsi@gmail.com

During a recent faunal survey from 7–13 April 2012 at the Eravikulam National Park, Idukki District, Kerala, the migratory movement of Dark Cerulean *Jamides bochus* (Stoll), was observed near Bhimanada (10.18554N & 77.09081E; 2085m) on 12 April 2012. They were flying from the high ranges to lower elevations in a north-east to south-west direction. The swarm was noticed at around 11:00hr flying through the trek path along the edges of a shola patch. Initially the count was about 36 in 5 minutes from 11:00 to 11:05 hr which increased to 65 from 11:15 to 11:20 hr. The wind direction was supportive for the migration. All were flying at a height of 2–3 m from the ground. At times, the butterflies were found resting on the flowers of Crofton Weed *Ageratina adenophora* for nectar



(Image 1). The unmistakable glistening blue on the forewing indicated that the majority of them were male, and the swarm looked like a series of glistening blue flashes during the flight. The weather was sunny, and the wind was from east to west. However, it had been rainy and cloudy during the previous few days in and around Eravikulam. The summer rains on the hills probably triggered the mass movement of the butterflies.

The other butterflies observed along with the migration of Dark Ceruleans were the Common Blue Bottle *Graphium sarpedon*, Common Crow *Euploea core*, Indian Cabbage White *Pieris canidia* and the White-Disc Hedge Blue *Celatoxia albidisca*. As many as six Common Blue Bottles, five Common Crows, five Indian Cabbage Whites and four White Disc Hedge Blues were observed during the count, flying along with the swarms of Dark Cerulean. The other butterfly species flew along with the migration for a short while and returning.

While climbing from the foothills of Vaguvarai in the morning, an unusually large assemblage of Dark Cerulean butterflies flying around the bushes and tea plantations was noticed. But the species was totally absent beyond Bhimanada. On our return trip on 13 April 2012, again the migration of these butterflies flying in same direction, but in smaller numbers, was

Date of publication (online): 26 November 2012
Date of publication (print): 26 November 2012
ISSN 0974-7907 (online) | 0974-7893 (print)

Editor: George Mathew

Manuscript details:

Ms # o3244
Received 30 June 2012
Finally accepted 28 September 2012

Citation: Palot, M.J. (2012). A note on the migration of Dark Cerulean *Jamides bochus* (Stoll) (Lepidoptera: Lycaenidae) in Eravikulam National Park, Idukki District, Kerala, India. *Journal of Threatened Taxa* 4(14): 3373–3374.

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Acknowledgements: The author is grateful Dr. K. Venkatraman, Director, Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), Kolkata and to Shri. C. Radhakrishnan, Additional Director, ZSI, Kozhikode for facilities and encouragement.

urn:lsid:zoobank.org:pub:04766E59-ADD2-4FBC-9553-02F90560D6D0

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Image 1. The Dark Cerulean *Jamides bochus* nectar feeding from the flowers of *Ageratina adenophora* in Eravikulam National Park.

observed. About eight butterflies could be counted at around 12:45 to 12:50 hr at the same spot.

Dark Cerulean is a widespread species known to occur in India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh (Kehimkar 2008). This beautiful little butterfly is found almost all over India, on the plains and in the hills, except in the arid northwest. Even though the species is common and frequently reported from other protected areas of Kerala, it has not previously been reported at the Eravikulam NP (Radhakrishnan & Sharma 2002). It is a known migrant species in the Nilgiris; Larsen (1987) reported migration of this species in the late 1950s towards the east at Kotagiri. Williams (1938) on his report on 'Migration of Butterflies in India' did not mention the migration of Dark Cerulean in India or elsewhere. A study on the migratory butterflies of the Western Ghats of Kerala by Palot (2010) also did not list this species from the region.

Except for the *Crotalaria* spp., none of the larval food plants known for the species—*Butea monosperma*, *Crotalaria* spp., *Millettia peguensis*, *Tephrosia candida*, *Vigna cylindrica*, *Pongamia pinnata*, *Xylia xylocarpa* (Kunte 2000)—are reported from the Eravikulam NP (Unniyal et al. 1998). A small portion on the eastern periphery of the Park lying close to Talliar Estate has deciduous forests with trees like *Dalbergia latifolia*, *Pterocarpus marsupium*, *Xylia xylocarpa* and *Pongamia pinnata* including many larval food plants of the Dark Cerulean. This forest patch in the eastern side of the Park may be the staging point for the large scale migration of Dark Cerulean in the region.

The other butterfly species observed during the trek from Vaguvarai to Hut on 12 April 2012 were the Palni

Fourring *Ypthima ypthimoides* (100+), Indian Cabbage White *Pieris canidia* (10), Small Orange Tip *Colotis estrida* (30), Red-disc Bushbrown *Mycalesis oculus* (25), Common Blue Bottle *Graphium sarpedon* (5), Indian Fritillary *Argynnis hyperbius* (5), Indian Red Admiral *Vanessa indica* (6), Red Helen *Papilio helenus* (2), White-Disc Hedge Blue *Celatoxia albidisca* (4), and Tamil Grass Dart *Taractrocera ceramas* (6).

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