
***Sylepta* sp. (Lepidoptera: Pyralidae) - a new pest of Soalu (*Litsaea monopetala*) in Kalimpong Hills**

¹M. D. Maji, C. Maji and ²S. Nirmal Kumar

¹Regional Sericultural Research Station, Kalimpong-734301, India, ²Central Sericultural Research and Training Institute, Berhampore-742101, India, E-mail: mdmaji2009@yahoo.in

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Muga culture is an age-old practice in the Brahmaputra valley of Assam. During the year 2010, muga sericulture has been introduced in Kalimpong hills (latitude 27°06'N, longitude 88°47'E, 1247 m above msl) for production of seed crop which is adversely affected in Assam due to increase of temperature as a result of global warming. Soalu [*Litsaea monopetala* (Roxb) Pearson] (Family: Lauraceae) is one of the primary food plants of muga silkworm (*Antheraea assamensis* Helfer). It grows abundantly in the hills of Kalimpong. Muga food plants are usually attacked by many pests like shoot borer, trunk borer, leaf miners, leaf galls and mealy bugs (1,2). Incidence of pest adversely affects leaf yield and quality. During the year 2011, a new pest infestation caused by leaf roller was found severely affected foliage of soalu plants in a place (27°2'35"N/88°27'57"E) of Kalimpong Hills. The aim of this paper is to highlight important observations of the new pest affected the Soalu food plant of muga silkworm in the Kalimpong hills. Pest damage symptoms, larval, pupal character and adult stage were photographed by Kodak AF 3X10.3 mega pixels camera. For identifica-

tion of the pest, adult moths were dried in oven and kept in glass vials and despatched to the Zoological Survey of India, Central Entomological Laboratory Kolkata (India) for identification. It was observed that leaf roller incidence appeared on 2nd week of July and continued up to September. Caterpillars attacked the top leaf of the branch and formed a protective shelter of leaves that they rolled and web together with silken thread (Fig. 1a). Caterpillar feed rolled leaves from the margin. In each rolled leaves, 4-6 nos. of caterpillar were observed. Mature larvae were found pale green (glistening) and semi translucent up to 30mm in length with dark head (Fig. 1b). The larva possesses three pairs of thoracic legs and four abdominal prolegs. Larvae pupate inside rolled leaf and emerged 16-18 days after pupation. Pupae were found brick red in colour and 20 mm in length. The pupa is conical in shape with ten abdominal segments, distinctly separated except the 9th and 10th segments. The genital pore occurs ventrally below the 8th abdominal segment in the female and in the male on the 9th segment. Adult moth was found 15 mm in length with yellowish wings with brown waxy marking

and wingspan of 25-30mm (Fig. 1d). The pest of the Soalu plant was identified by the Zoological Survey of India, Kolkata as *Sylepta* sp. The scanning of published literature revealed that the pest was not reported earlier from any other muga growing region of the country. Hence, infestation of this pest (*Sylepta* sp.) on Soalu (*Litsaea monopetala*) plants is a new record from Kalimpong Hills of India.

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Literature Cited

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a. *Sylepta* sp. infested Soalu plant



b. *Sylepta* sp. larvae



c. *Sylepta* sp. pupae



d. Adult *Sylepta* sp.

Fig.1 (a-d) *Sylepta* sp. with its nature of damage, larval, pupal and adult stage