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Faunal exploratory trips to the Chotanagpur Plateau and Rarh regions of West Bengal in eastern India, with a faunal bibliography of the regions (1833 – 2025)

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a photographic report and a bibliographic account of the fauna of the Chotanagpur Plateau and its adjacent Rarh regions of West Bengal in eastern India, covering the districts of Purulia, Bankura, Jhargram, Paschim Medinipur, Paschim Bardhaman and Birbhum. The faunal bibliography includes 533 scientific literatures, from the year 1833 to 2025.

Keywords: Chotanagpur Plateau, Rarh, Faunal Bibliography, West Bengal, India

INTRODUCTION

The Chotanagpur Plateau (CNP, hereafter) is a rugged, forested landscape with hills and valleys in eastern India, that lies between the moist deciduous forests of the Eastern Ghats and the Satpura range and the lower reaches of the Gangetic Plains, covering most of the Jharkhand state, and the bordering areas of Odisha, West Bengal, Bihar and Chhattisgarh states of India [5, 25]. In West Bengal, it includes Purulia, Bankura and Jhargram districts [21]. The CNP is one of the oldest landmasses on the Earth, as it is composed of Precambrian rocks and Gondwana formations, that are more than 540 million years old [5, 25]. The plateau lies between the basins of the river Ganga and the Son to the north, and the river Mahanadi to the south [5] (**Figure 1**). The CNP is one of the India's least explored biogeographic regions covering an area of about 1,20,000 sq.km. [25].

The Rarh region is a physiographic area of the Indian Subcontinent that lies between the CNP on the west and the Gangetic Delta on the east, covering 6 districts of West Bengal *viz.* Bankura, Birbhum, Jhargram, Paschim Medinipur, Paschim Bardhaman and Purulia [25]. The major rivers of the region include Damodar, Shilabati, Kangsabati, Dwarakeswar, Ajay and Mayurakshi. All of them originate from the CNP and flows towards east or southeast, where they meet the river Hooghly, a tributary of the Ganga river. The soil of this area can be divided into three categories, *viz.* light red to brown coloured laterite soil, sandy soil, and loamy soil [22]. Important industries of this region are iron, thermal power station, cement, mining, fertilizer, food processing, textile, plywood, paper, silk, cotton, etc. [22].

The flora of the CNP ranges from dry to wet deciduous forests and scrub vegetations, with plants like sal (*Shorea robusta*), mahua (*Madhuca longifolia*), flame of the forest (*Butea monosperma*), sissou (*Dalbergia sissou*), mango (*Mangifera indica*), arjun (*Terminalia arjuna*), bamboo (*Bambusa* spp.), etc. [22, 23]. This region is home to diverse wildlife including Indian wolf, pangolin, porcupine, hyena, sloth bear, jungle cat, wild boar, Malabar Pied-hornbill, Indian rock python, etc. [23]. Ecotourism and theme oriented heritage tourism include great destinations in these regions of West Bengal [13].

With growing population density, the existing forested areas of the CNP and the Rarh regions are under significant pressure due to agricultural, industrial and urban growth and mining for coal, iron, bauxite, mica, limestone and magnesium, leading to large-scale deforestation and soil erosion and affecting native wildlife [22, 23]. Some of the hills with breathtaking natural beauty of these regions of West Bengal are Ajodhya, Joychandi, Susunia, Biharinath, etc.

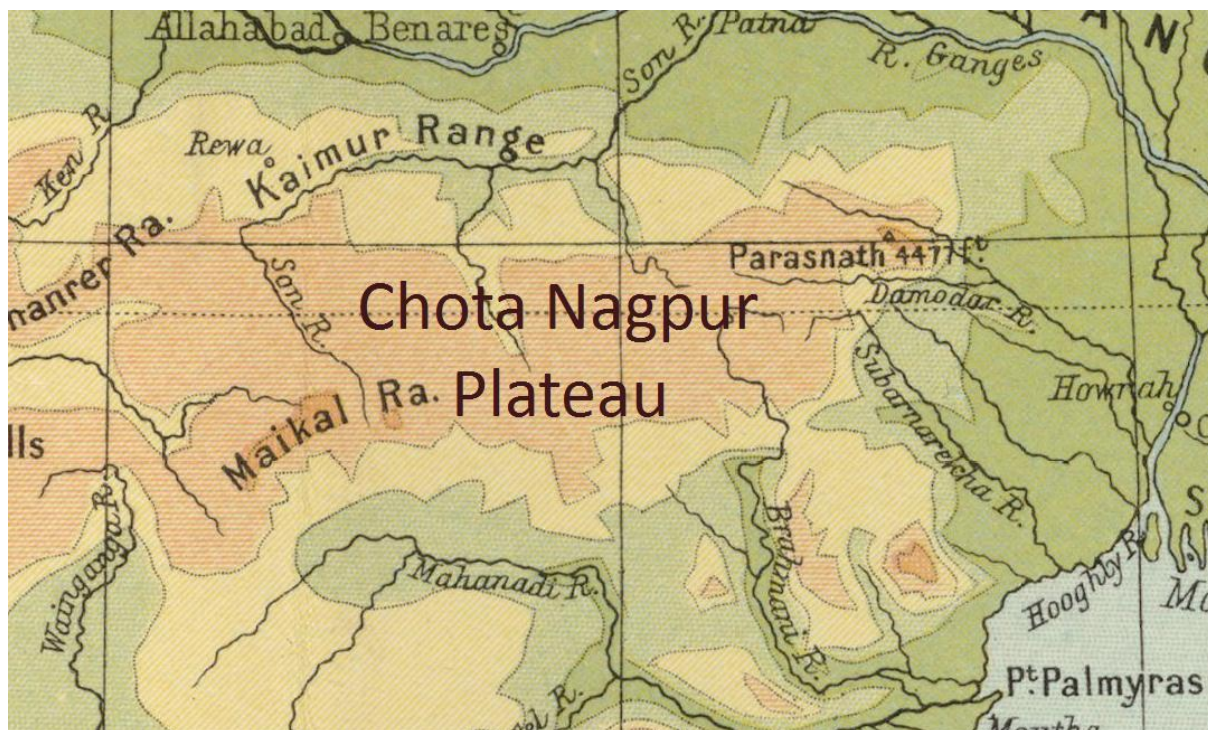


Figure 1. Orographical features of Chotanagpur Plateau, India (1909 Imperial Gazetteer of India map section). Source: Wikimedia.

I surveyed some parts of CNP and Rarh regions of West Bengal to explore the faunal diversity. I visited Birbhum in November 2016, Jhargram in October 2019, Purulia in July 2022 and Paschim Medinipur in October 2019 (**PMA in photos**) and June 2024 (**PMB in photos**). During these surveys, I came across several wild animals and breathtaking landscapes of the mentioned districts (Purulia: **Photos 1-72**; Paschim Medinipur: **Photos 73-103**; Jhargram: **Photos 104-130**; Birbhum: **Photos 131-135**). All the photographs presented here, were captured with my Nikon Coolpix B500 camera. Different animal species were identified following standard literatures and websites [6, 11, 12, 14-20].

In the present paper, I have made an attempt to prepare a scientific bibliography on various faunal taxa of the CNP and adjacent Rarh regions of Purulia, Bankura, Paschim Medinipur, Jhargram, Paschim Bardhaman and Birbhum districts of West Bengal, India. These scientific literatures include peer-reviewed papers, Ph.D thesis, scientific articles, gazetteers, governmental and non-governmental reports and scientific books. A faunal bibliography is an important tool of academic references for knowledge gaining and scientific research purpose, as well as to find the gaps in research topics and to avoid repetitive research. Several faunal bibliographic literatures were published previously in India [1-4, 7-10, 24], but there were none made for these particular regions of West Bengal. Hence, the present attempt was made. The present bibliography include 533 literatures covering a period of nearly two centuries, starting from 1833 to 2025. Scientific literatures were searched in internet, using various databases and websites, like Internet Archive (<https://archive.org>), Biodiversity Heritage Library (<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>), ResearchGate (<https://researchgate.net>), Google Scholar

(<https://scholar.google.com>), etc. This kind of bibliographic work can not be complete, as there are always publications which are beyond the accessibility of the bibliographer. This work will, hopefully, help people to find ready references on several faunal taxa of these regions of West Bengal, India.

CONCLUSION

Chotanagpur Plateau and its adjacent Rarh regions are interesting physiographic areas of West Bengal, India, with more than 540 million years old Precambrian rocks and Gondwana formations. It is one of the oldest landmasses of our planet Earth. This paper deals with a photographic report and a scientific bibliography of 533 literatures from the year 1833 to 2025, on the fauna of these regions of West Bengal.

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Appendix



Photo 1. Banka Dahar viewpoint of Ajudhya range in Purulia with beautiful forest and winding road.



Photo 2. *Amblypodia anita* butterfly (Lycaenidae) puddling on road. Banka Dahar viewpoint, Purulia.



Photo 3. Busy Purulia town.



Photo 4. Bank Mynas (*Acridotheres ginginianus*) perching on overhead electric wires of Purulia town.



Photo 5. Common Myna (*Acridotheres tristis*) in a garbage area of Purulia town.



Photo 6. Asian Pied Starling (*Gracupica contra*) with its nest made on an electric pole of Purulia town.



Photo 7. A Brahminy Starling (*Sturnia pagodarum*) from Purulia town.

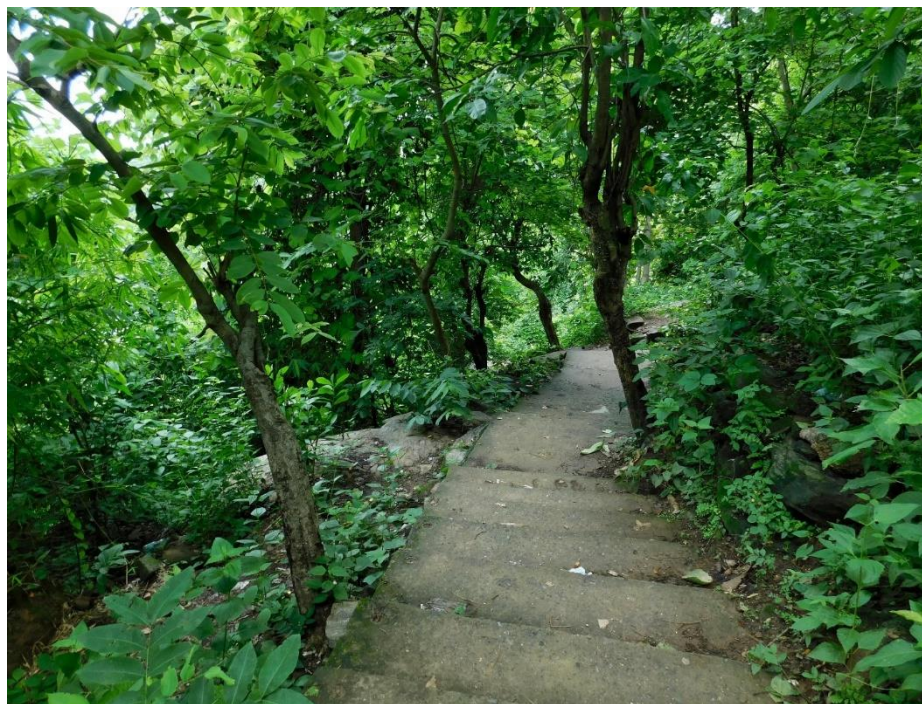


Photo 8. Path to Bamni Waterfalls, Purulia, surrounded by pristine forest.



Photo 9. A male *Caconeura ramburi* damselfly (Platycnemididae), from the forested area around Bamni Waterfalls, Purulia.



Photo 10. An adult *Eutropis carinata* skink (Scincidae) on a rock near Bamni Waterfalls, Purulia.



Photo 11. Dense forest near Bamni Waterfalls, Purulia.

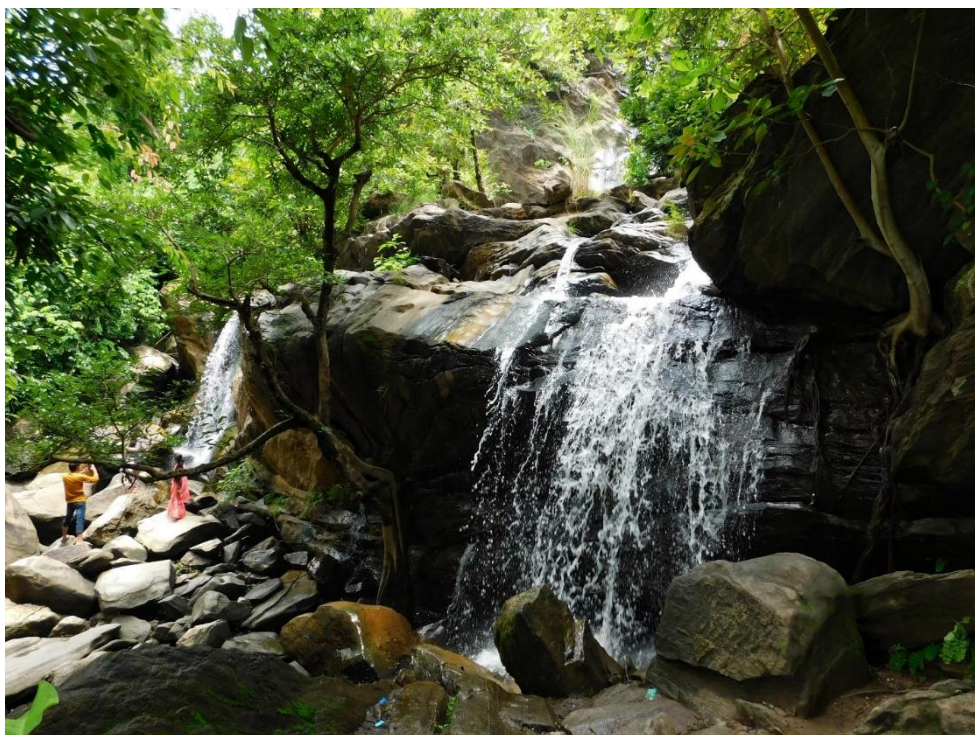


Photo 12. Bamni waterfalls, Purulia.



Photo 13. Male *Curetis acuta* butterfly (Lycaenidae) near Bamni waterfalls, Purulia.

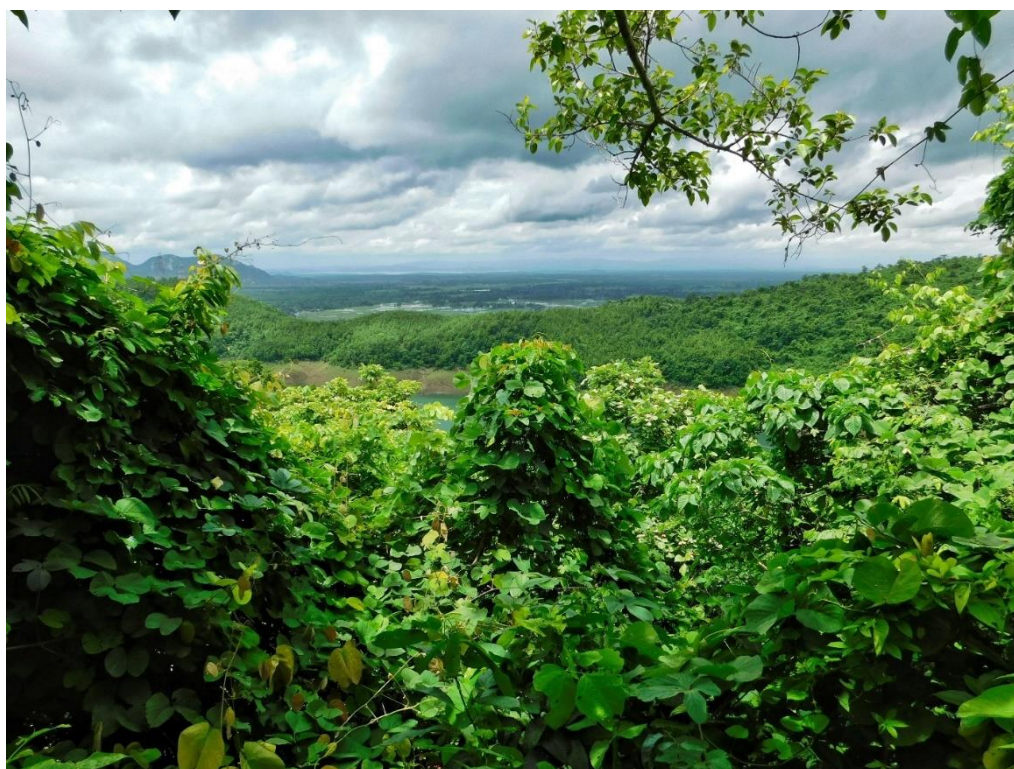


Photo 14. Landscape view around Bamni waterfalls, Purulia.



Photo 15. Turga waterfalls viewpoint, Purulia.

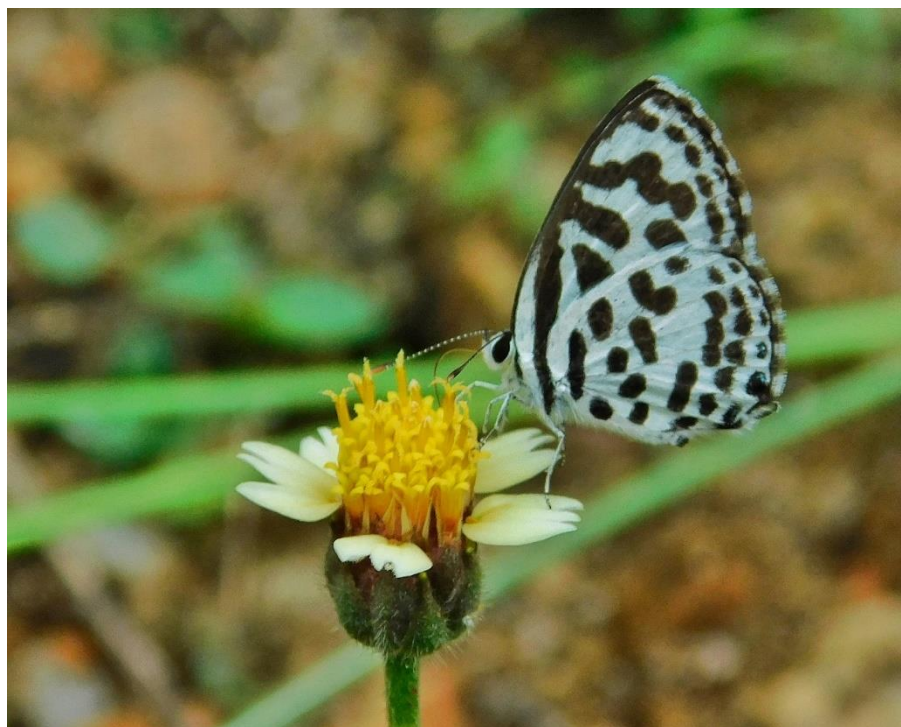


Photo 16. *Castalius rosimon* butterfly (Lycaenidae) nectaring on *Tridax procumbens* flower. Near Turga waterfalls, Purulia.

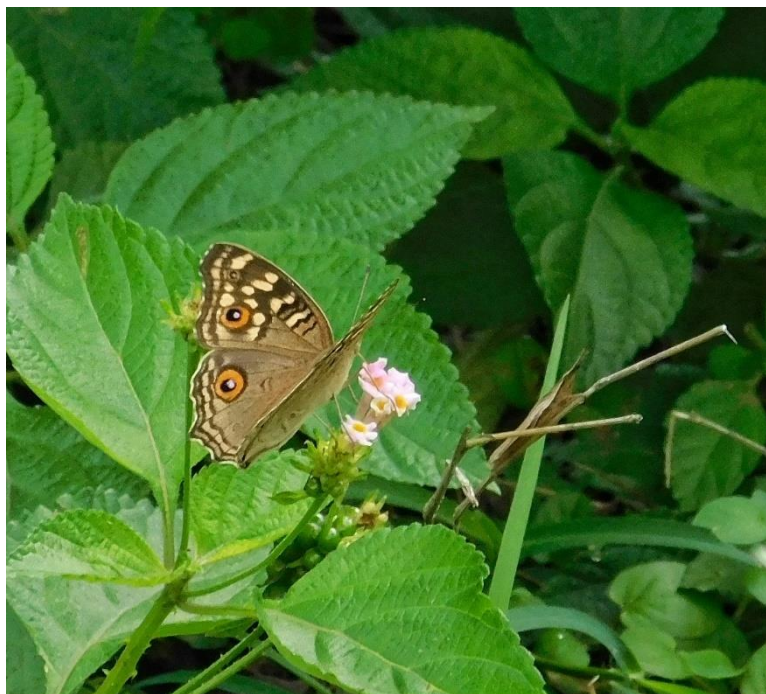


Photo 17. *Junonia lemonias* butterfly (Nymphalidae) nectaring on *Lantana* flowers near Turga waterfalls, Purulia.

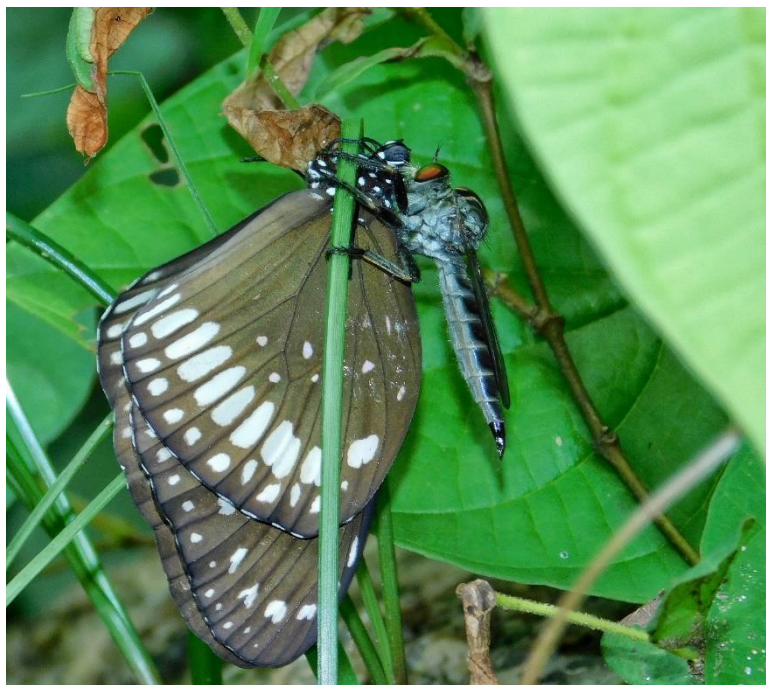


Photo 18. Predation of a robberfly (Asilidae) on an *Euploea core* butterfly (Nymphalidae) near Turga waterfalls, Purulia.



Photo 19. *Euploea core* butterfly (Nymphalidae) nectaring on *Tridax procumbens* flower near Turga waterfalls, Purulia.

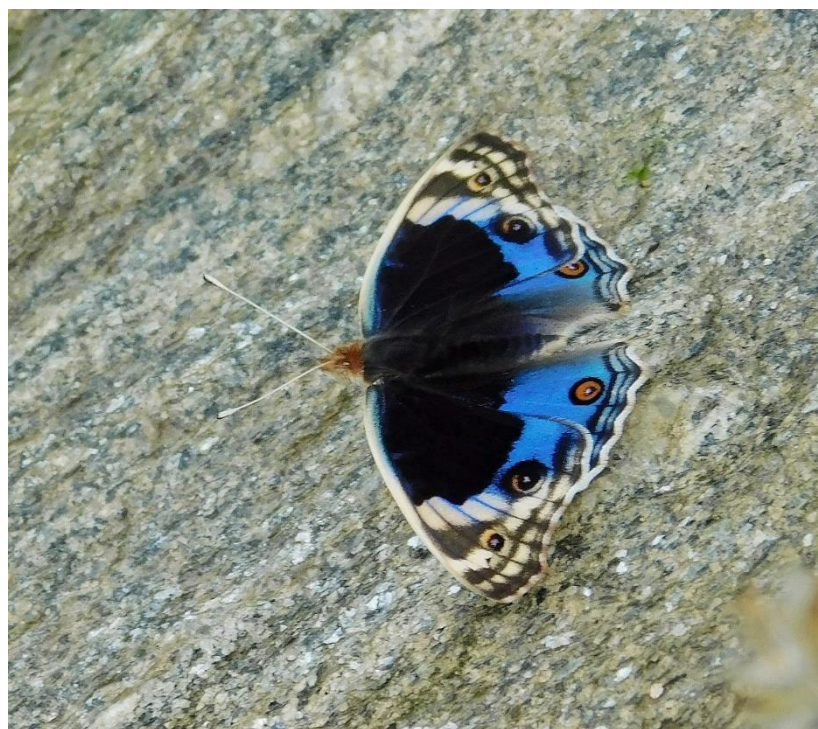


Photo 20. A *Junonia orithya* butterfly (Nymphalidae) perching on a rock near Turga waterfalls, Purulia.



Photo 21. A female Blanford's Rock Agama *Psammophilus blanfordanus* (Agamidae) perching on a rock, near Turga waterfalls, Purulia.

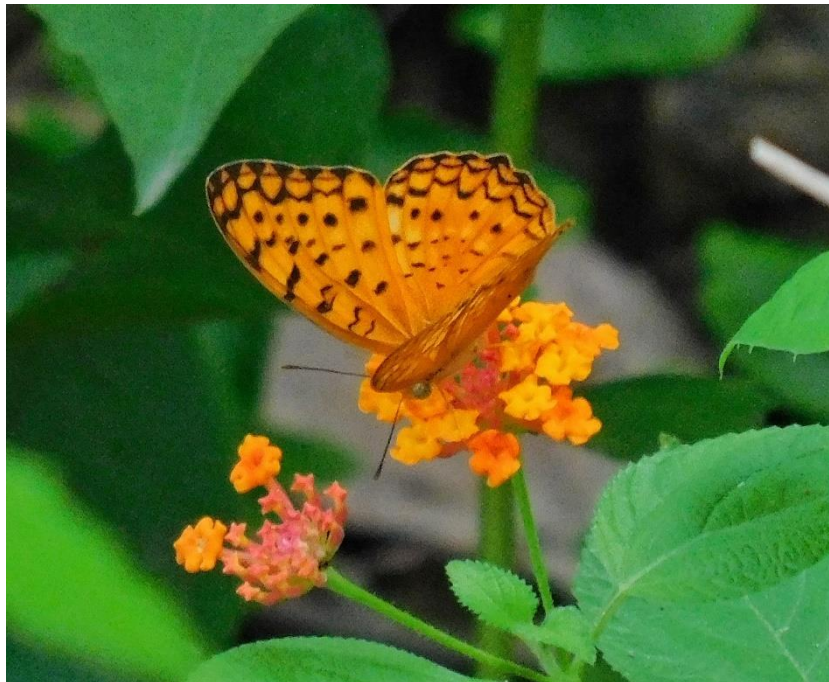


Photo 22. *Phalanta phalantha* butterfly (Nymphalidae) nectaring on *Lantana* flowers near Turga waterfalls, Purulia.



Photo 23. Local handicrafts selling beside road near Turga waterfalls, Purulia.



Photo 24. A beautiful view from the top of Mayur Pahar, Purulia.



Photo 25. An adult male Blanford's Rock Agama *Psammophilus blanfordanus* (Agamidae) perching on a rock of Mayur Pahar, Purulia.



Photo 26. *Hasora chromus* butterfly (Hesperiidae) from Mayur Pahar, Purulia.



Photo 27. A beautiful wetland with aquatic vegetations from Baghmundi, Purulia.



Photo 28. An *Ariaphanta* snail from Purulia.

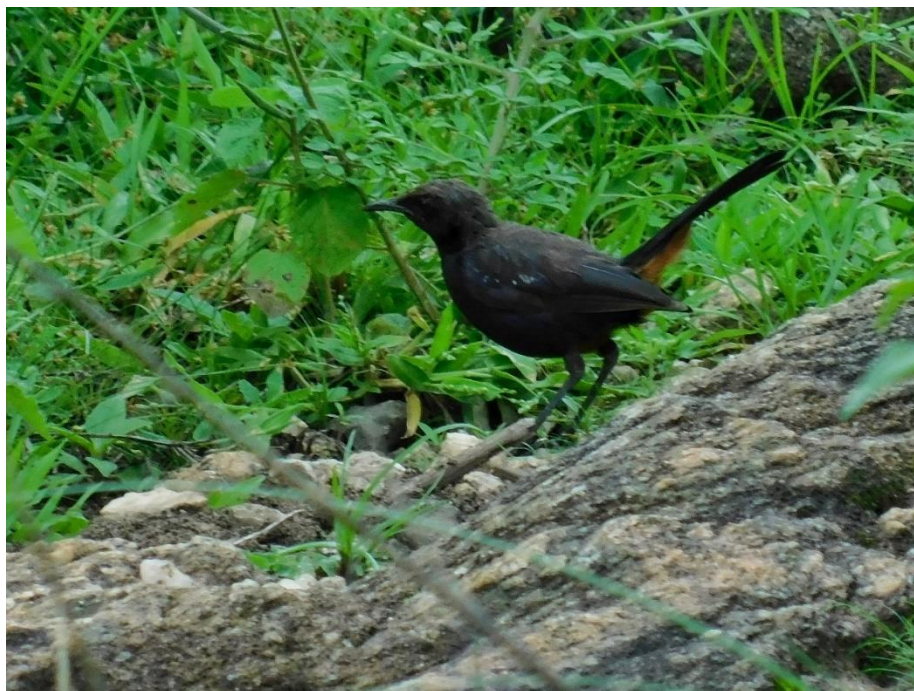


Photo 29. A male Indian Robin *Copsychus fulicatus* from Baghmundi, Purulia.

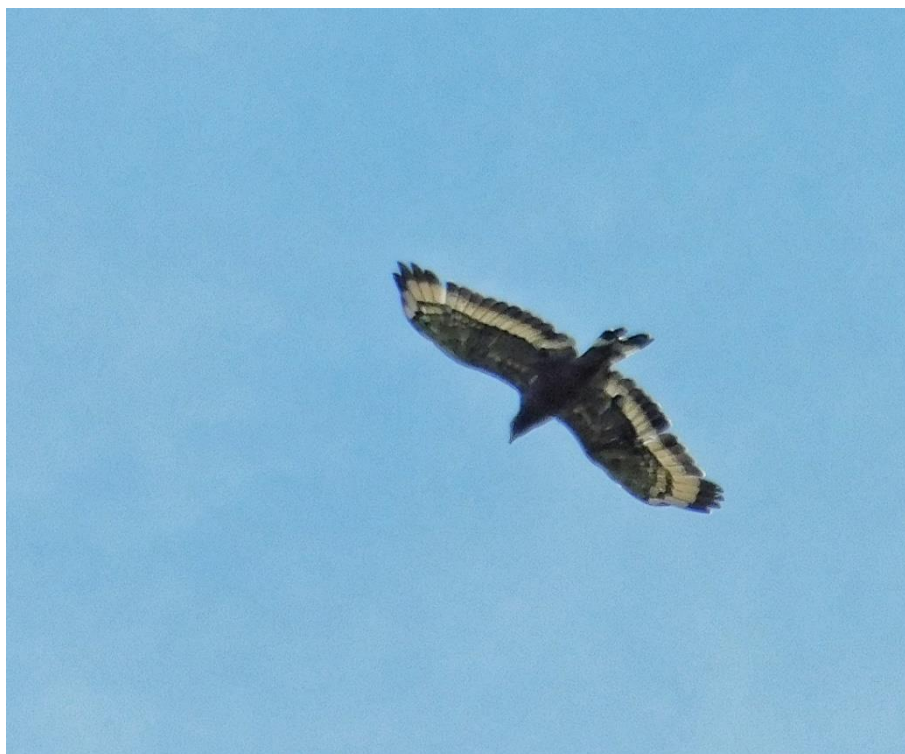


Photo 30. A Crested Serpent Eagle *Spilornis cheela* soaring over Baghmundi, Purulia.



Photo 31. A Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis* sitting on its nest in a shaded part of a house, Baghmundi, Purulia.



Photo 32. A male *Acisoma panorpoides* dragonfly (Libellulidae) perching on aquatic vegetation of a wetland of Baghmundi, Purulia.



Photo 33. A female *Agriocnemis kalinga* damselfly (Coenagrionidae) from Baghmundi, Purulia.



Photo 34. A *Calotes vultuosus* lizard (Agamidae) from a garden of Baghmundi, Purulia.



Photo 35. View from the top of Joychandi hills, Purulia.

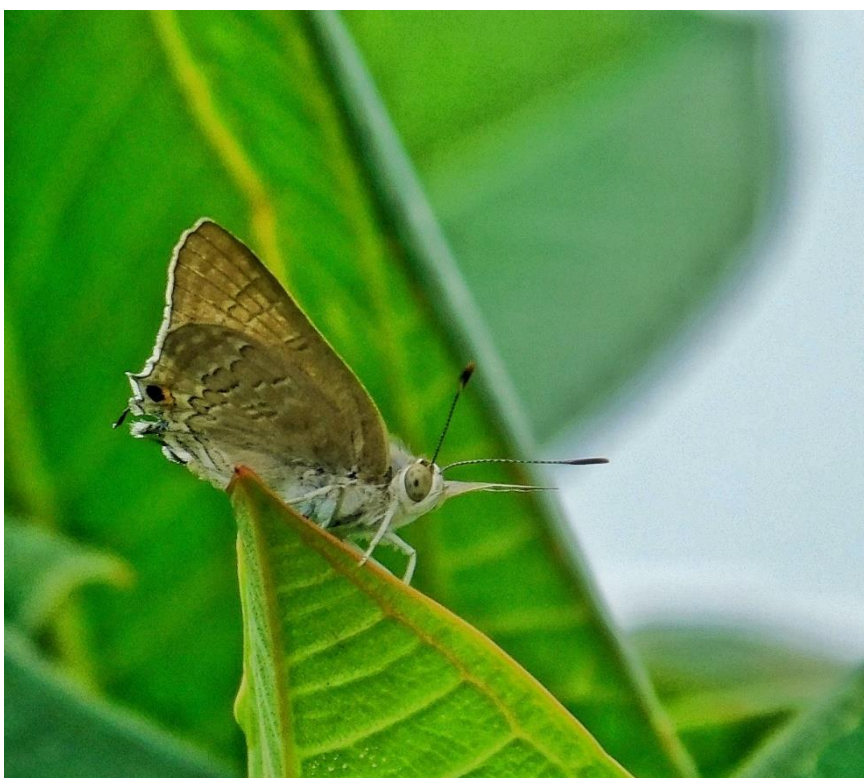


Photo 36. A *Virachola isocrates* butterfly (Lycaenidae) perching on a *Plumeria* leaf on Joychandi hills, Purulia.



Photo 37. An *Amblypodia anita* butterfly (Lycaenidae) nectaring from *Lantana* flowers on Joychandi hills, Purulia.

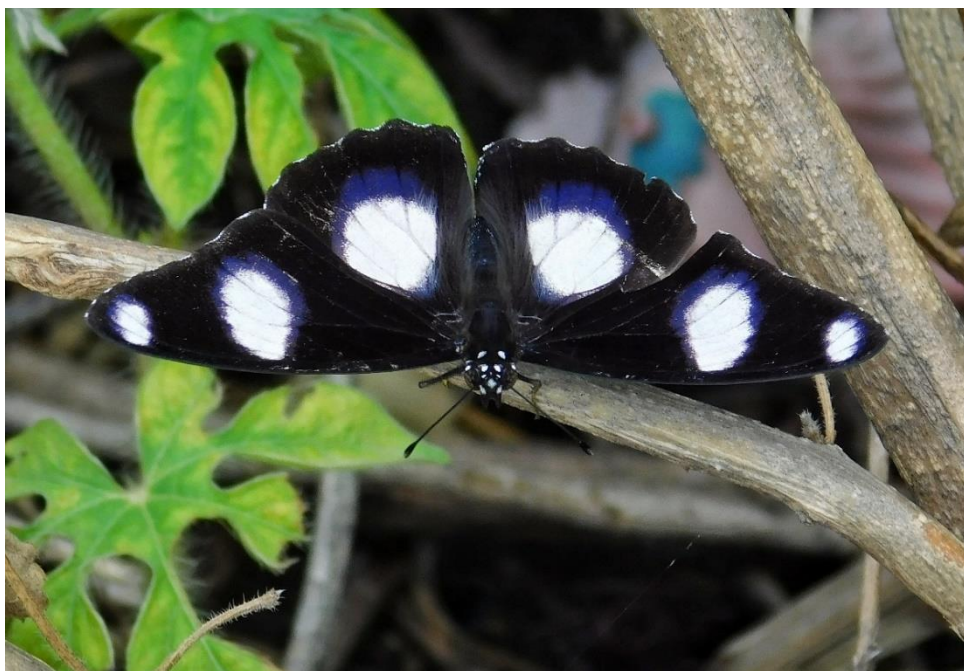


Photo 38. A male *Hypolimnas misippus* butterfly (Nymphalidae) from Joychandi hills, Purulia.



Photo 39. A male *Hypolimnas bolina* butterfly (Nymphalidae) from Joychandi hills, Purulia.

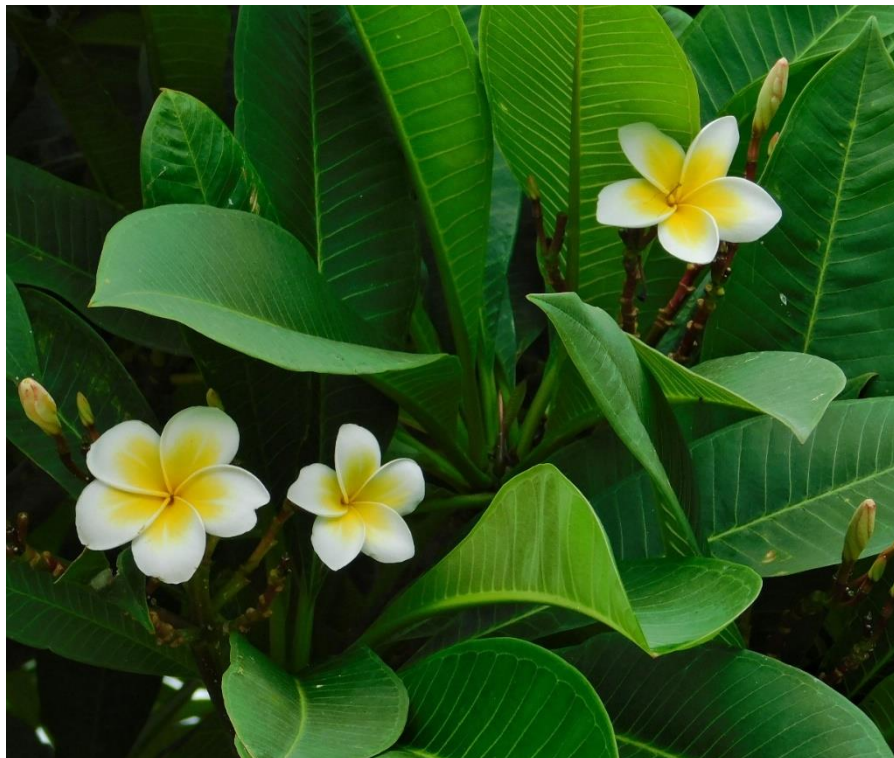


Photo 40. The beauty of the blooming *Plumeria* flowers from Joychandi hills, Purulia.



Photo 41. Underwing view of a male *Spindasis ictis* butterfly (Lycaenidae) from Joychandi hills, Purulia.



Photo 42. Upperwing view of male *Spindasis ictis*.



Photo 43. Grey-breasted Prinia *Prinia hodgsoni* from Joychandi hills, Purulia.

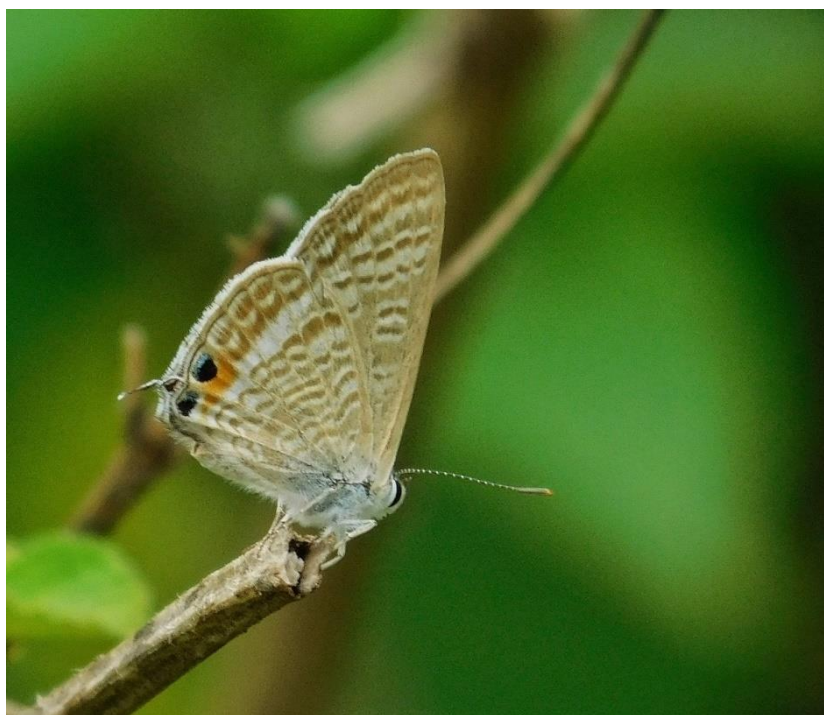


Photo 44. Peablu butterfly *Lampides boeticus* (Lycaenidae) from Joychandi hills, Purulia.



Photo 45. A part of Joychandi hills, Purulia.

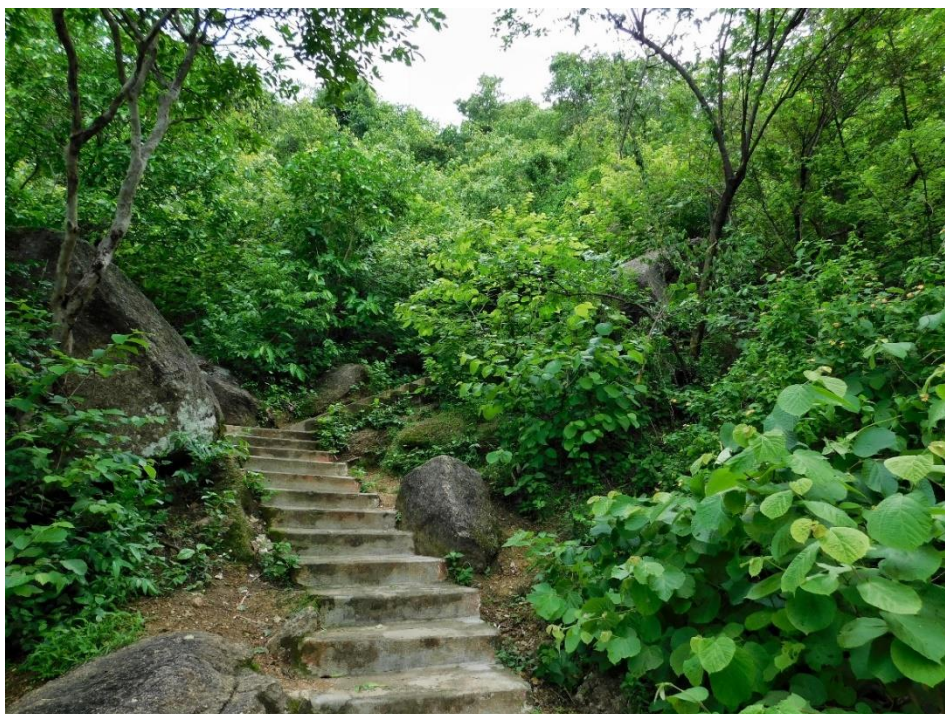


Photo 46. Forested area of Joychandi hills, Purulia.



Photo 47. A Phalangopsid cricket, hiding on dark side of a boulder on daytime.
Joychandi hills, Purulia.



Photo 48. Male *Onychargia atrocyana* (Coenagrionidae) perching on a leaf
on Joychandi hills, Purulia.

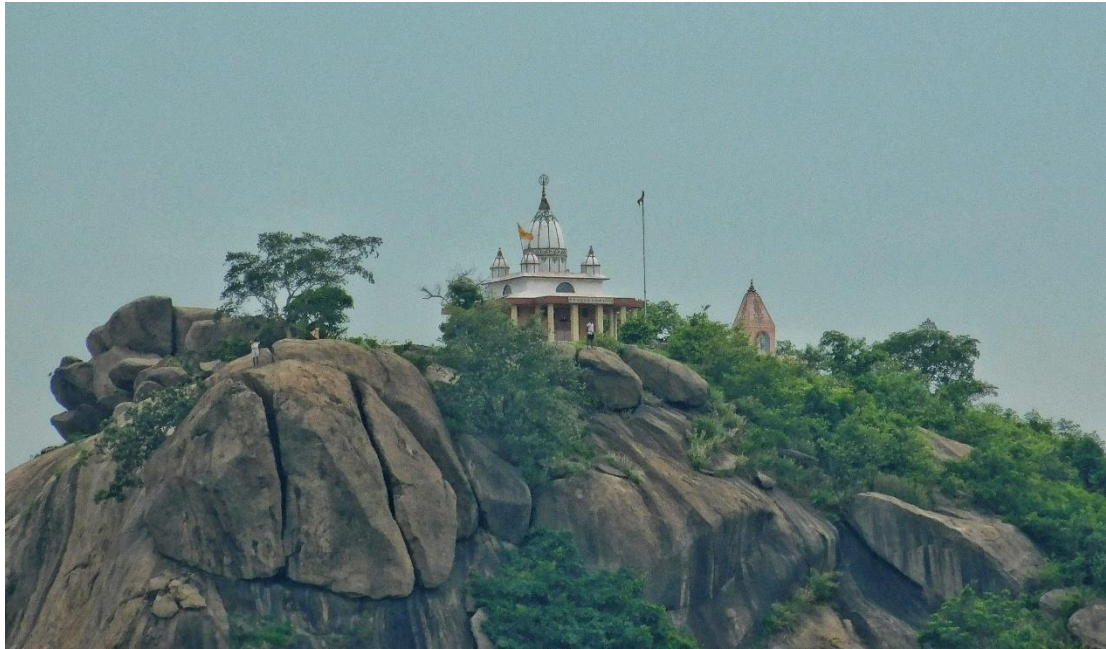


Photo 49. Devi Chandi temple on the peak of Joychandi hills, Purulia.



Photo 50. A mating pair of millipedes. Joychandi hills, Purulia.



Photo 51. Lower dam of Purulia.



Photo 52. Damodar River, Purulia.



Photo 53. several Wire-tailed Swallows *Hirundo smithii* were observed to flying over the Damodar river, Purulia.



Photo 54. A *Kalidasa albiflos* bug from Baghmundi, Purulia.



Photo 55. Mudpuddling individuals of *Catopsilia pyranthe* butterflies (Pieridae) from Baghmundi, Purulia.



Photo 56. A Tettigonid bushcricket on a leaf. Baghmundi, Purulia.



Photo 57. A curious Golder Jackel *Canis aureus* from Ajodhya range, Purulia.



Photo 58. A *Hemidactylus* gecko preying on a termite alate (Isoptera) in Baghmundi, Purulia.



Photo 59. A Five-striped Palm Squirrel *Funumbulus pennanti* from Ajothya range, Purulia.



Photo 60. Famous handmade masks of Charida Village, Purulia.



Photo 61. Marble Lake of Purulia.



Photo 62. More than 20 individuals of *Disparoneura quadrimaculata* damselflies (Platynemididae) were observed on the rocks near Marble Lake of Purulia.



Photo 63. A *Chilades pandava* butterfly (Lycaenidae) nectaring on *Ocimum tenuiflorum* flowers from Purulia.



Photo 64. *Vespa tropica* and *Vespa velutina* hornets (Vespidae) feeding on a rotten jackfruit in Purulia.



Photo 65. Garhpanchakot temple at the foothills of Panchet hills of Purulia.



Photo 66. Painted Grasshopper *Poekilocerus pictus* feeding on *Calotropis gigantea* flower in Garhpanchakot of Purulia.

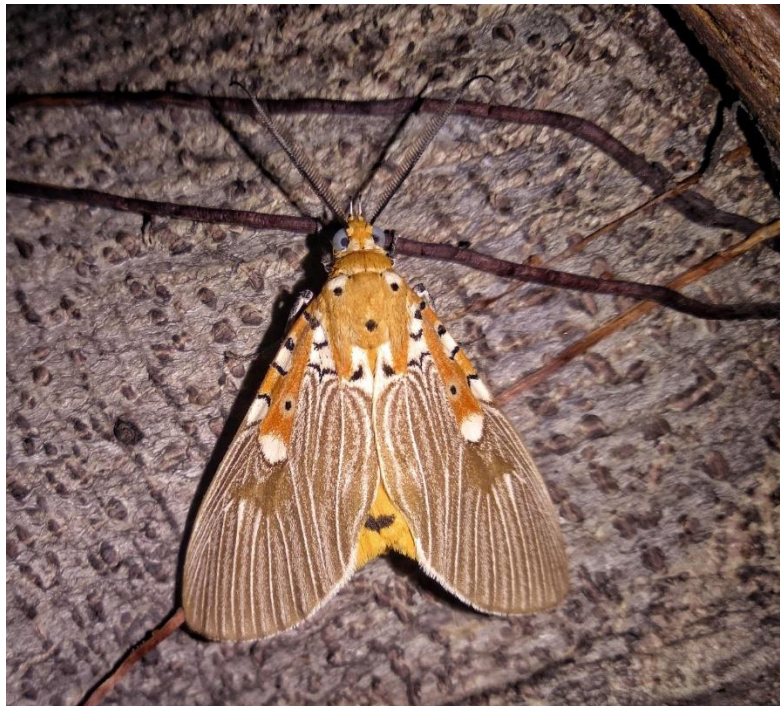


Photo 67. *Asota ficus* moth (Erebidae) perching on a *Ficus bengalensis* tree trunk in Garhpanchakot, Purulia. It is their larval host plant.



Photo 68. Underwing view of a newly eclosed *Asota ficus* moth on the same tree trunk.

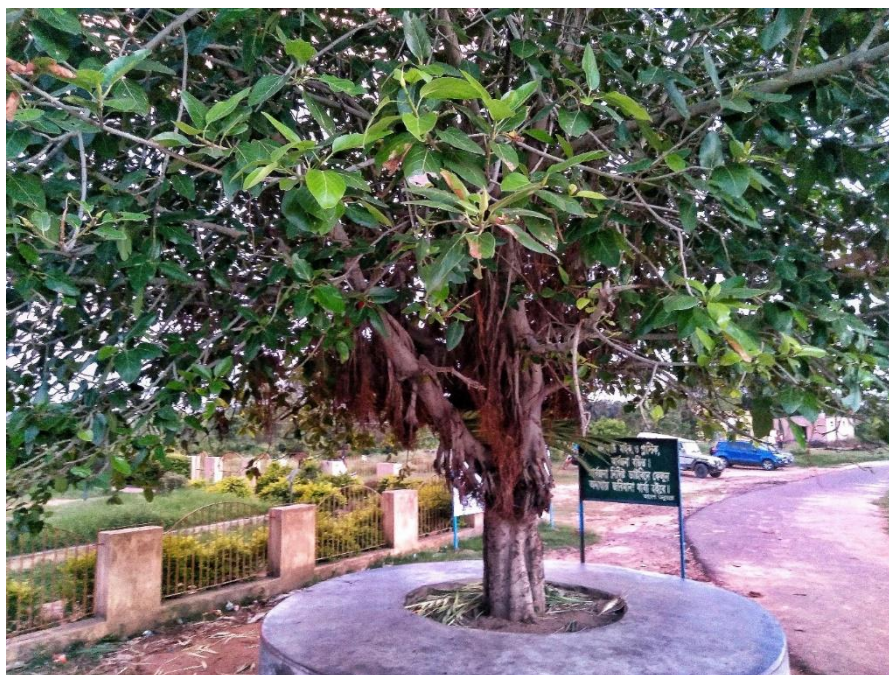


Photo 69. The *Ficus bengalensis* tree on which several *Asota ficus* moths were observed in Garhpanchakot, Purulia.



Photo 70. Multiple individuals of *Kalidasa albiflos* bugs are perching on a tree trunk in Garhpanchakot, Purulia.



Photo 71. Forested area at the foothills of Panchet hills, Purulia.



Photo 72. The beautiful Joychandi hill, Purulia.



Photo 73. *Cyperus* sedge (family Cyperaceae) covered field in Kharagpur, Paschim Medinipur (PMB).



Photo 74. *Epicrocis* moth (Pyralidae) resting on a leaf beside a field. Kharagpur, Paschim Medinipur (PMB).



Photo 75. A fruiting *Phoenix sylvestris* tree standing on a grassy field of Kharagpur, Paschim Medinipur (PMB).



Photo 76. A salticid spider preying on a fly. Kharagpur, Paschim Medinipur (PMB).

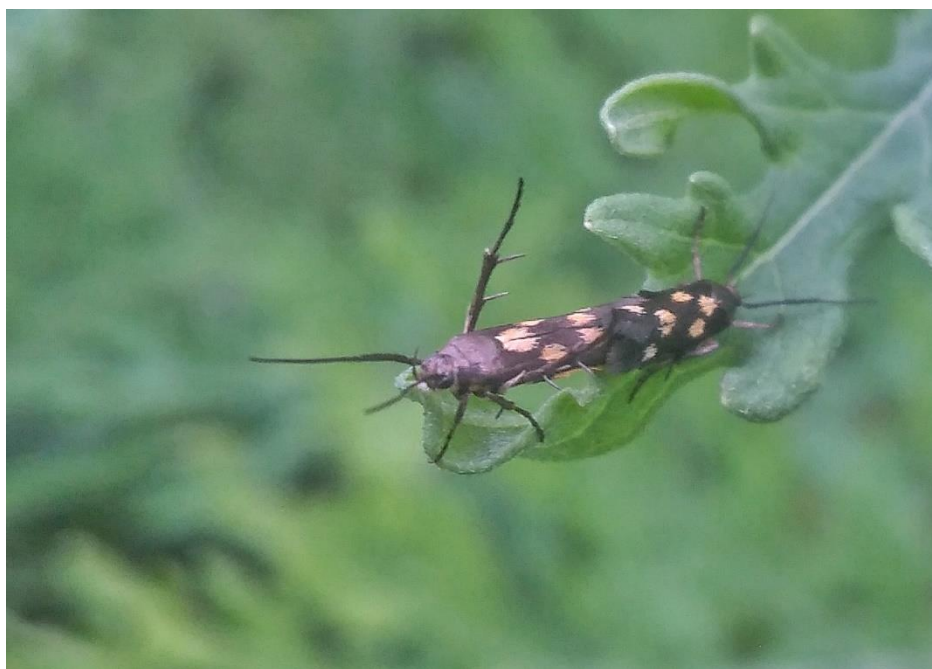


Photo 77. Mating pair of *Eretmocera impactella* moths (Scythrididae) on a leaf in a grassy field habitat. Kharagpur, Paschim Medinipur (PMB).



Photo 78. A land planarian platyhelminth from Kharagpur, Paschim Medinipur (PMA).



Photo 79. *Chrysocoris* bug (Scutelleridae) from Kharagpur, Paschim Medinipur (PMB).



Photo 80. *Zygogramma bicolorata* beetle from Kharagpur, Paschim Medinipur (PMB).



Photo 81. *Peucetia lynx* spider predated on a termite alate (Isoptera). Kharagpur, Paschim Medinipur (PMB).



Photo 82. Herbivorous *Oides palleata* beetle from Kharagpur, Paschim Medinipur (PMB).



Photo 83. Eastern Cattle Egret *Ardea coromanda* on a grassy field from Kharagpur, Paschim Medinipur (PMA).

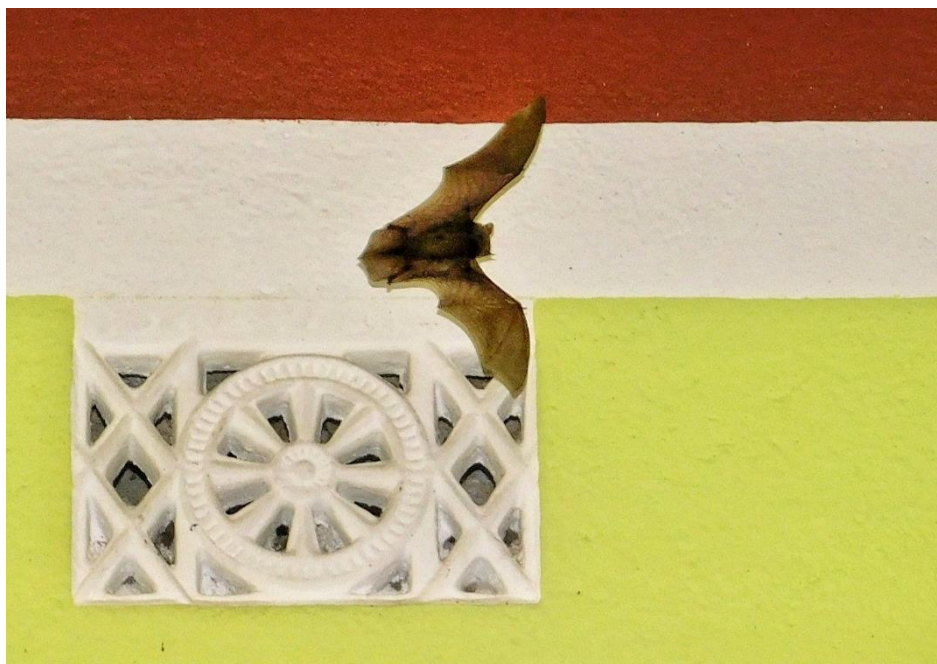


Photo 84. *Pipistrellus* bats (Vespertilionidae) sometimes enter into houses through air ventilators and open windows, like this individual. Sometimes they accidentally hit with running ceiling fan blades. Kharagpur, Paschim Medinipur (PMA).



Photo 85. A grassy habitat. Kharagpur, Paschim Medinipur (PMA).



Photo 86. Asian Openbill Stork *Anastomus oscitans* in a grassy field habitat. Kharagpur, Paschim Medinipur (PMA).

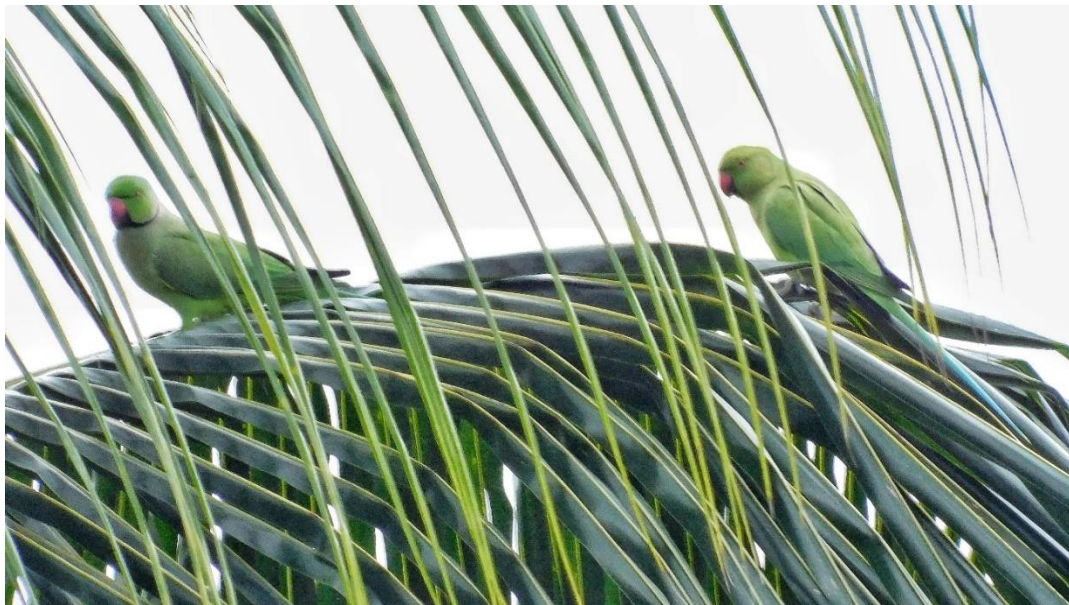


Photo 87. Rose-ringed Parakeets *Psittacula krameri* on a coconut tree. Kharagpur, Paschim Medinipur (PMA).



Photo 88. A male Pygmy Dartlet damselfly *Agriocnemis pygmaea* (Coenagrionidae) perching on a grass blade close to ground. Kharagpur, Paschim Medinipur (PMA).



Photo 89. A male Hooded Dartlet damselfly *Agriocnemis kalinga* (Coenagrionidae) in the same habitat of grassy field. Kharagpur, Paschim Medinipur (PMA).



Photo 90. A female Hooded Dartlet damselfly *Agriocnemis kalinga* (Coenagrionidae) perching on a grass blade. Kharagpur, Paschim Medinipur (PMA).



Photo 91. Microhabitat of adult *Agriocnemis* damselflies. Kharagpur, Paschim Medinipur (PMA).



Photo 92. A *Chlorophorus annularis* beetle (Cerambycidae) from Kharagpur, Paschim Medinipur (PMB).

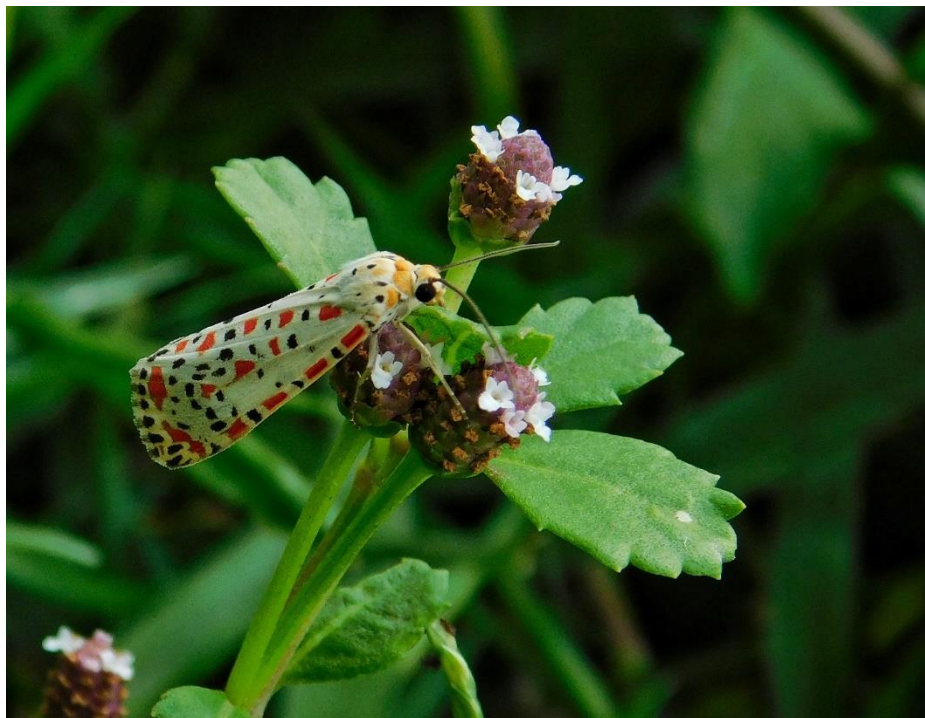


Photo 93. *Utetheisa* moth nectaring on *Phyla nodiflora* flowers on the edge of a grassy field of Kharagpur, Paschim Medinipur (PMB).



Photo 94. A *Kunugia* moth (Lasiocampidae) from Kharagpur, Paschim Medinipur (PMA).



Photo 95. Monsoon beauty of Bhadutola forest, Paschim Medinipur (PMB).

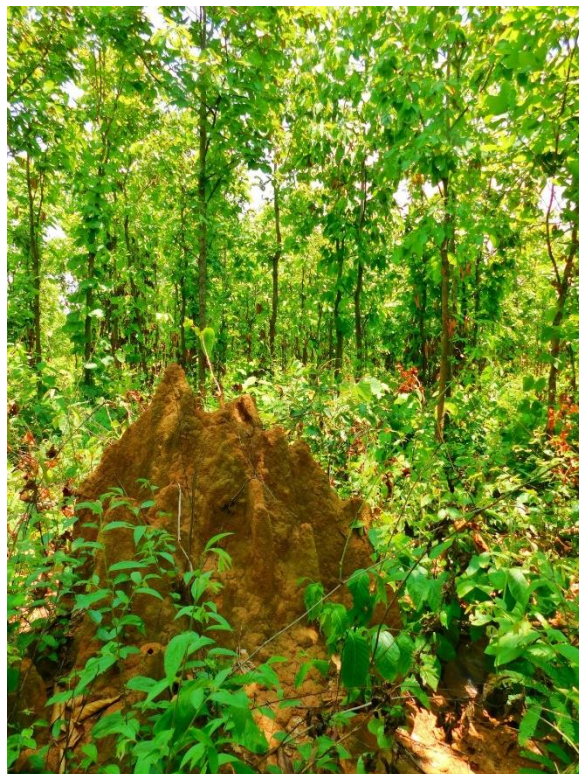


Photo 96. Termite mound in Bhadutola forest, Paschim Medinipur (PMB).



Photo 97. A male *Amphiallagma parvum* damselfly (Coenagrionidae) from Bhadutola forest, Paschim Medinipur (PMB).



Photo 98. A bee fly (Bombyliidae) from Bhadutola forest, Paschim Medinipur (PMB).



Photo 99. *Calochroa bicolor haemorrhoidalis* tiger beetle (Carabidae) from Bhadutola forest, Paschim Medinipur (PMB).



Photo 100. *Cicindela guttata* tiger beetle (Carabidae) from Bhadutola forest, Paschim Medinipur (PMB).



Photo 101. Caterpillar of Spot Swordtail butterfly *Graphium nomius* (Papilionidae) from Bhadutola forest, Paschim Medinipur (PMB).



Photo 102. *Crematogaster* ants (Formicidae) are tending a *Leptocentrus* treehopper (Membracidae) for its sugary secretion made from excess plant sap it consumes, and in return the treehopper gets protection from the ants, an example of mutualism in nature. Bhadutola forest, Paschim Medinipur (PMB).



Photo 103. An *Aethriamanta brevipennis* dragonfly (Libellulidae) perching on a dry branch. Bhadutola forest, Paschim Medinipur (PMB).



Photo 104. Tarafeni river, with surrounding rocky areas of Ghagra waterfalls in Jhargram.

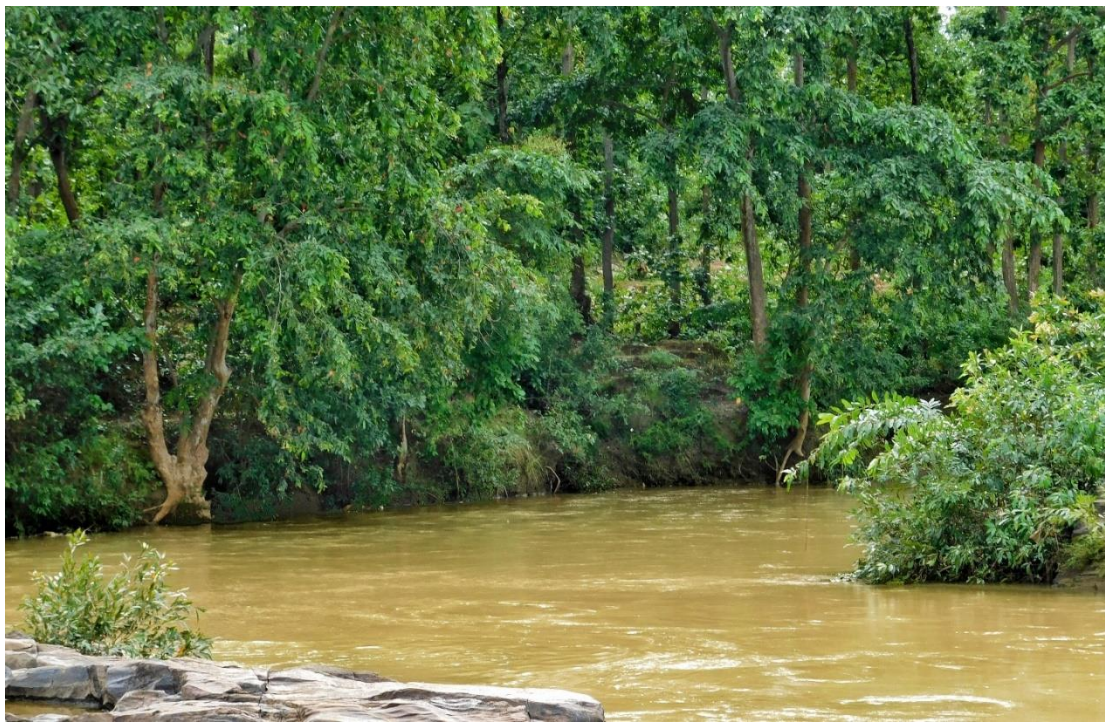


Photo 105. Tarafeni river, Jhargram.



Photo 106. *Euphlyctis* frog from Jhargram.



Photo 107. Mature male *Diplacodes trivialis* dragonfly (Libellulidae) near Ghagra waterfalls, Jhargram.



Photo 108. Immature male *Diplacodes trivialis* dragonfly (Libellulidae) near Ghagra waterfalls, Jhargram.

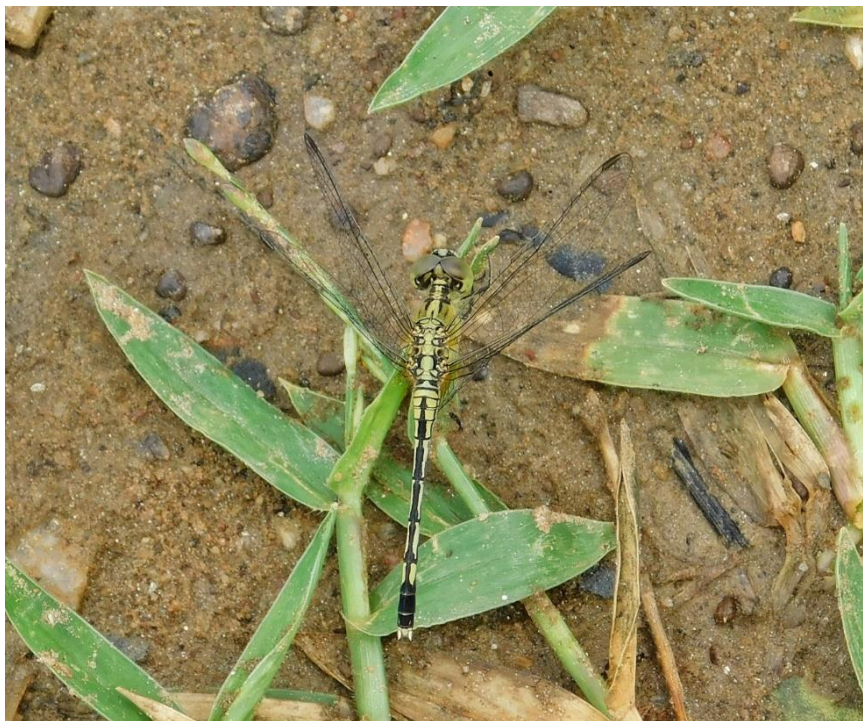


Photo 109. Female *Diplacodes trivialis* dragonfly (Libellulidae) near Ghagra waterfalls, Jhargram.



Photo 110. Several individuals of *Paranemobius* crickets (Trigonidiidae) were observed on rocks near Ghagra waterfalls of Jhargram.

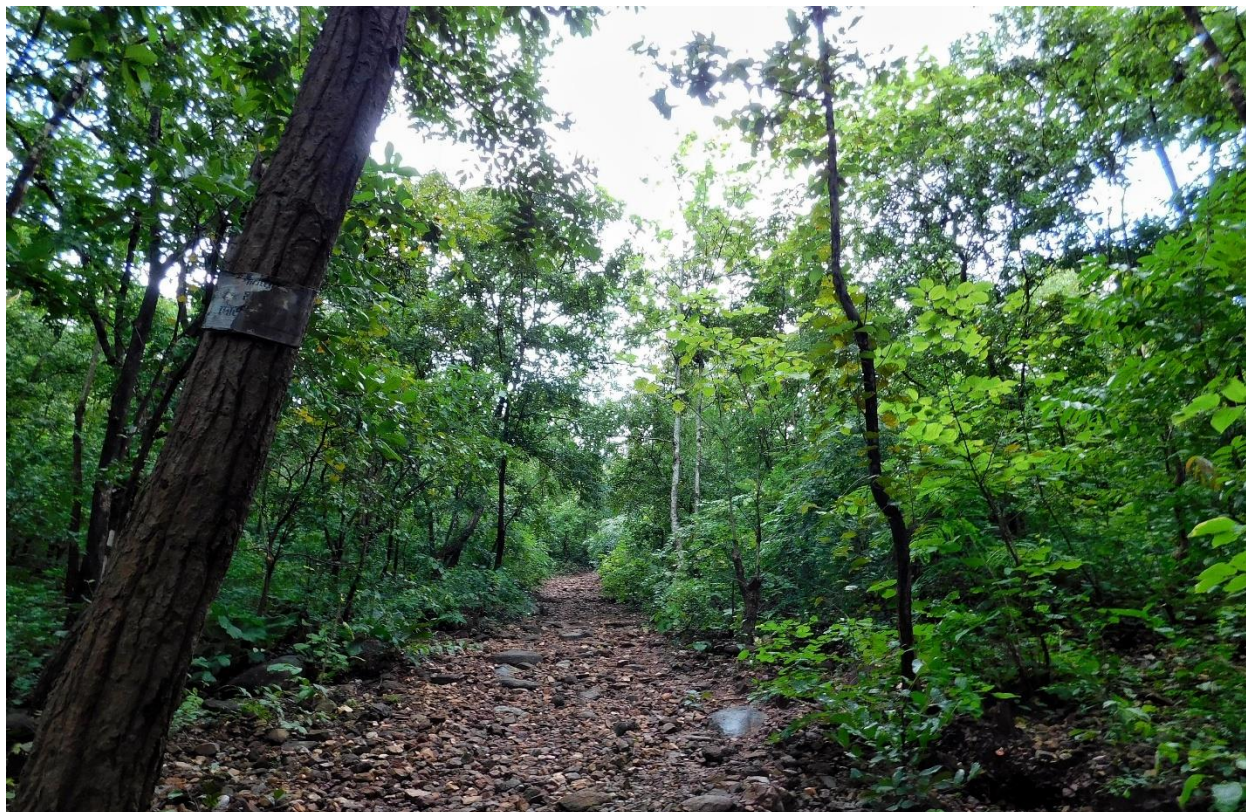


Photo 111. Forested area of Jhargram.



Photo 112. Fungi inside a forest. Jhargram.



Photo 113. Lichens are ecological indicators. Jhargram.



Photo 114. Ferns inside a forest. Jhargram.



Photo 115. A beautiful view of a forest from Jhargram.



Photo 116. Congregation of the larvae of *Amblypodia anita* butterfly (Lycaenidae) under a leaf of its host plant inside a forest of Jhargram.



Photo 117. The host plant of *Amblypodia anita* butterfly.



Photo 118. *Barleria* flower from a forest of Jhargram.



Photo 119. A *Psammophilus blanfordanus* rock agama perching on a algae-, moss- and lichen-covered rock inside a forest of Jhargram.

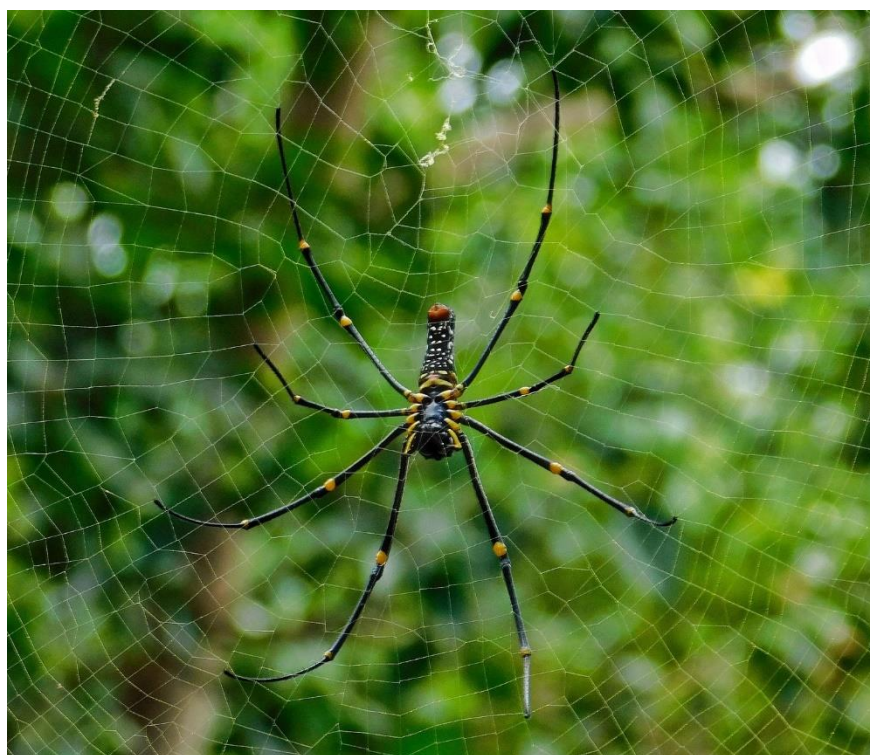


Photo 120. Female *Nephila* spider from Jhargram.

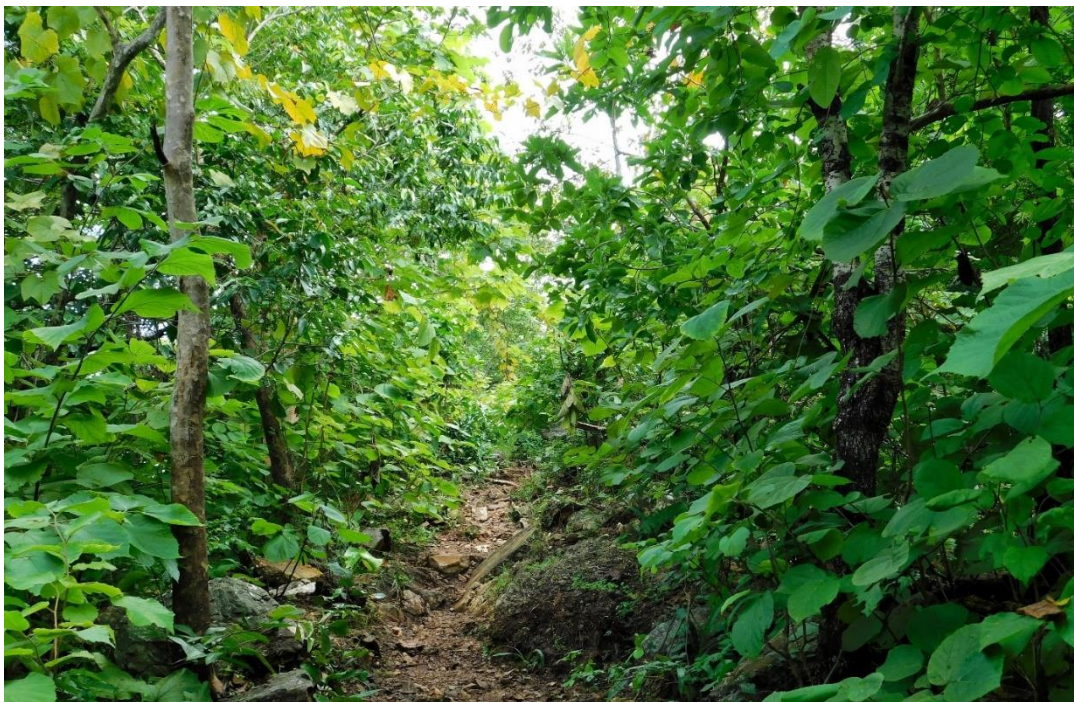


Photo 121. Inside beauty of a forested area in Jhargram.

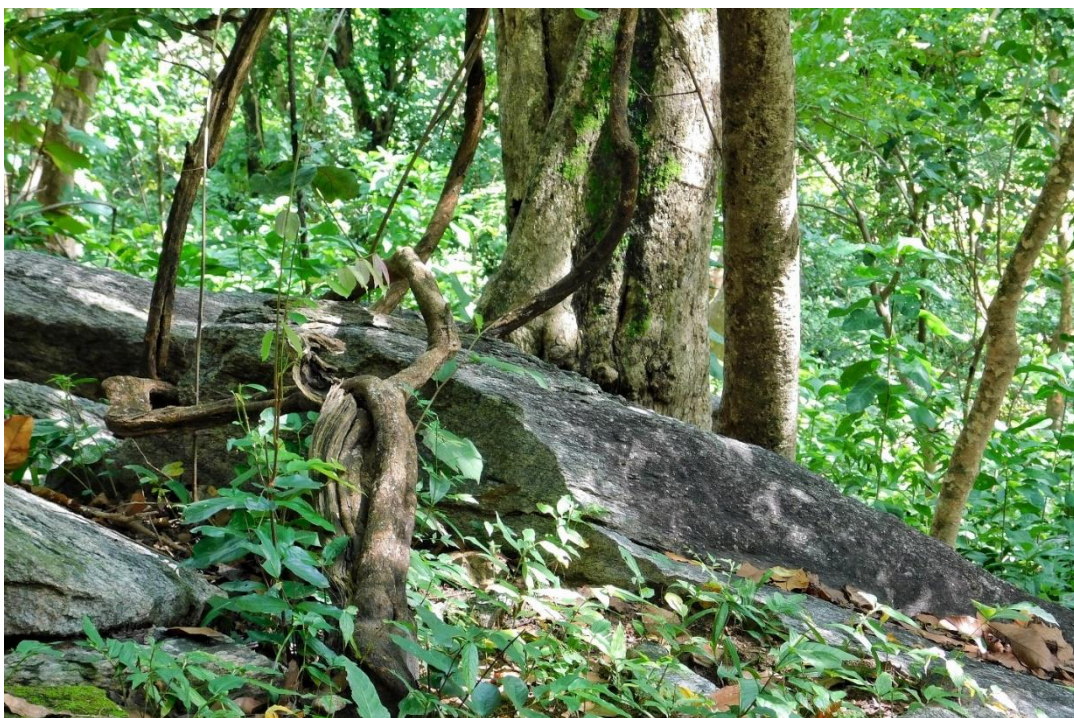


Photo 122. Rock formations inside a forest of Jhargram.

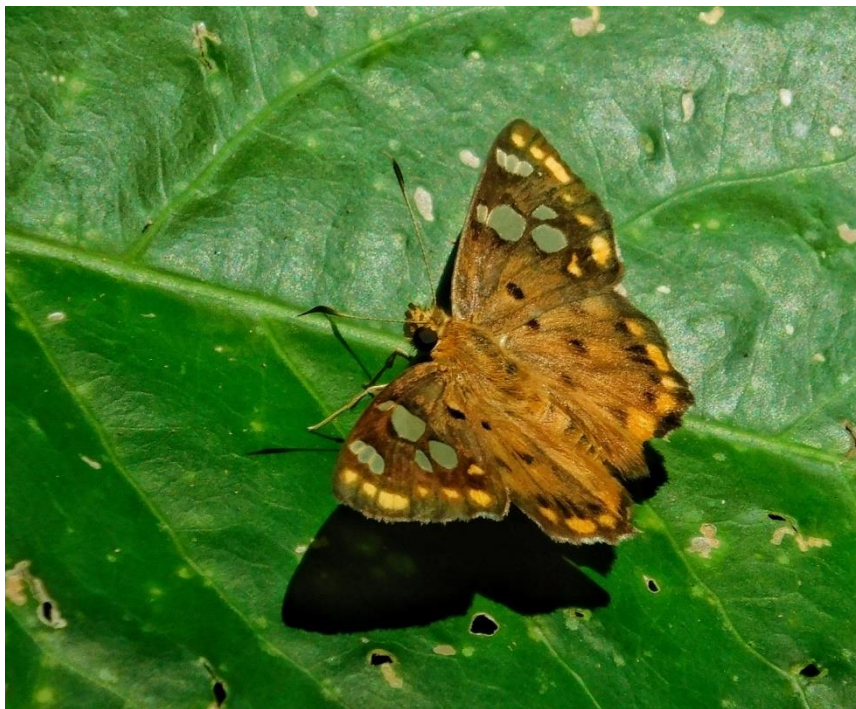


Photo 123. *Coladenia indrani* butterfly (Hesperiidae) perching on a leaf of Laljal forest, Jhargram.

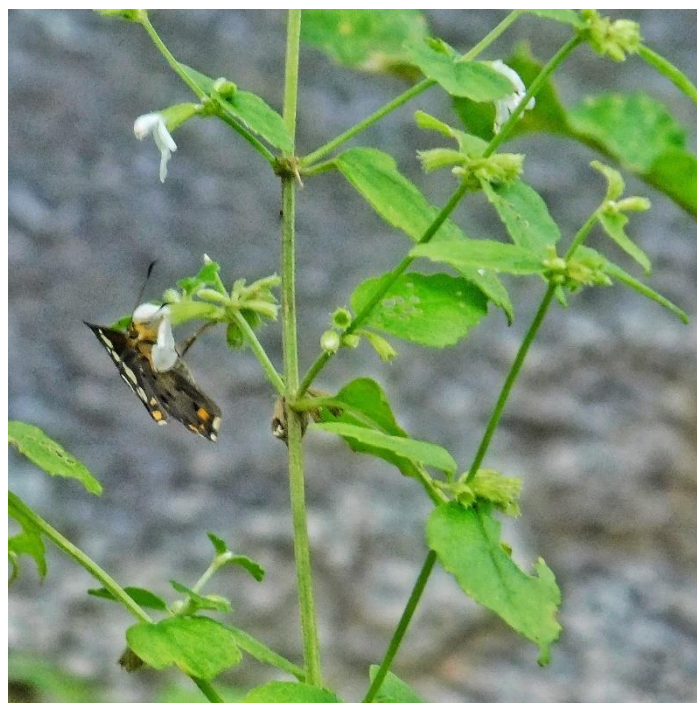


Photo 124. *Coladenia indrani* butterfly nectaring from *Leucas* flower from Laljal forest of Jhargram.



Photo 125. Laljal cave, Jhargram.

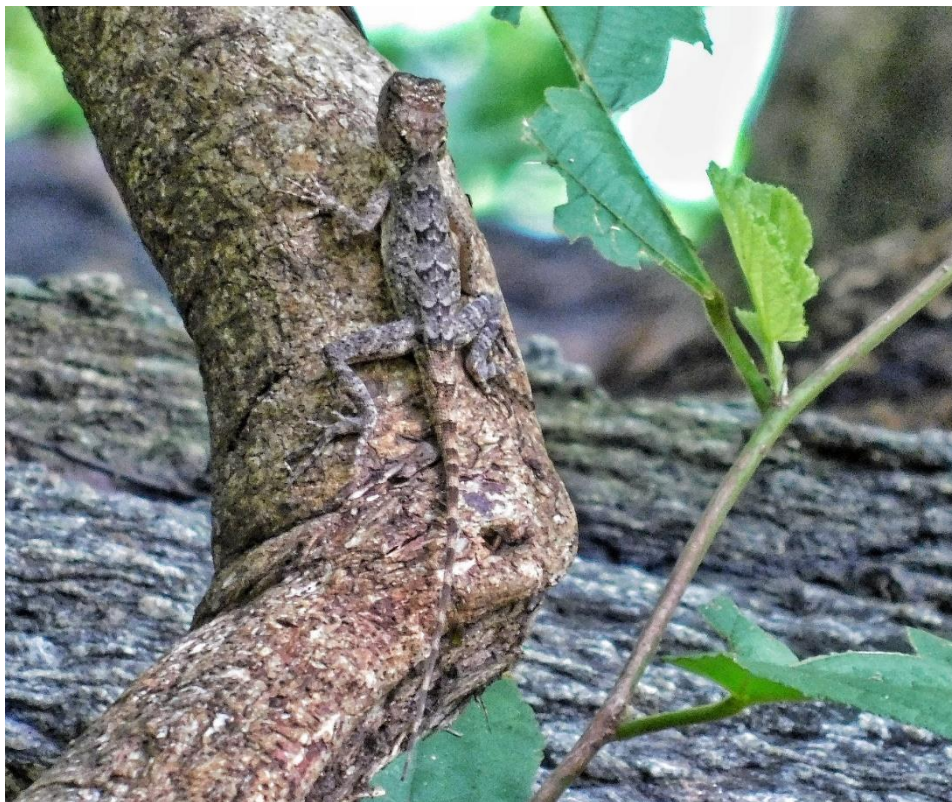


Photo 126. A *Psammophilus blanfordanus* rock agama perching on a tree trunk in Laljal forest, Jhargram.



Photo 127. A troop of Hanuman Langurs *Presbytis entellus* from Chilkigarh Kanak-Durga temple of Jhargram.



Photo 128. A female *Potamarcha congener* dragonfly near Chilkigarh Kanak-Durga temple, Jhargram.

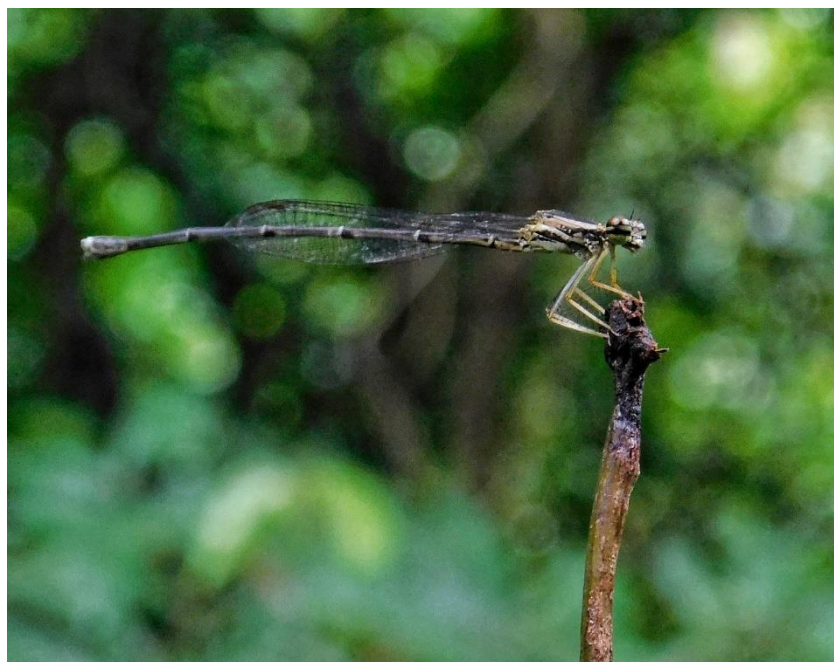


Photo 129. A female *Copera marginipes* damselfly (Platycnemididae) near Chilkgarh Kanak-Durga temple of Jhargram.



Photo 130. A male *Neurothemis fulvia* dragonfly (Libellulidae) near Chilkgarh Kanak-Durga temple, Jhargram.



Photo 131. Map of Ballavpur Wildlife Sanctuary, Birbhum.

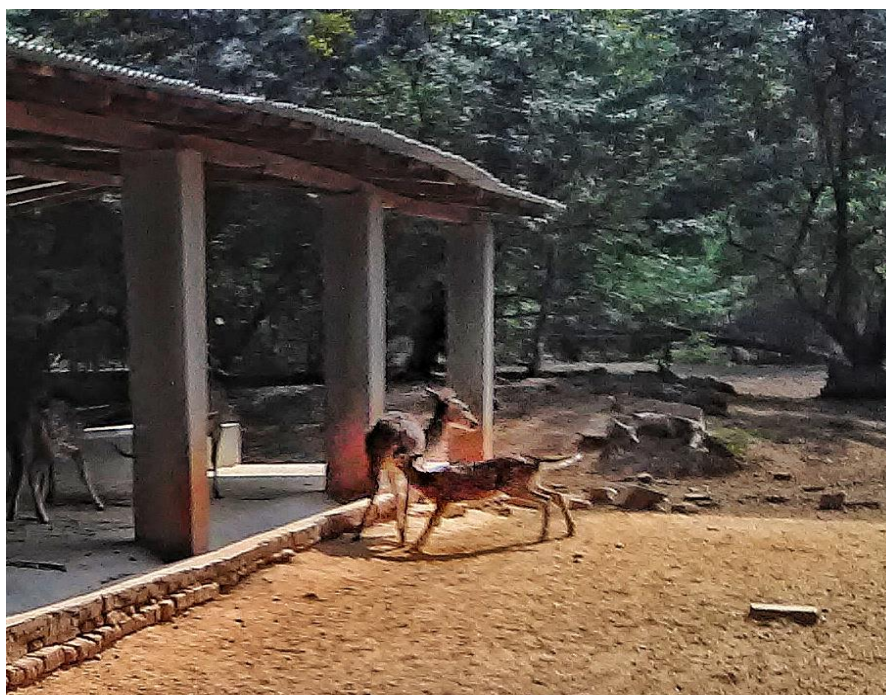


Photo 132. Spotted Deers *Axis axis* (Cervidae) of Ballavpur Wildlife Sanctuary, Birbhum.



Photo 133. A *Catopsilia pomona* butterfly nectaring from *Tephrosia purpurea* flower. Ballavpur Wildlife Sanctuary, Birbhum.



Photo 134. A *Catopsilia pomona* butterfly nectaring from *Sida* flower. Ballavpur Wildlife Sanctuary, Birbhum.



Photo 135. A jheel with aquatic vegetations. Ballavpur Wildlife Sanctuary, Birbhum.