

Feeding habit of The Death's head Hawkmoth (*Acherontia atropos* Linn.) caterpillar in Kerala, India.

Saroj,K.V., Sooraj, N.P., Sajeev, C.R., Athira, K. & R. Jaishanker

C.V.Raman Laboratory for Ecological Informatics,
Indian Institute of Information Technology and Management-Kerala,
Technopark campus, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala-India, 695 581.
skv@iiitmk.ac.in

The Death's-head Hawkmoth (*Acherontia atropos*) is native to Africa, and reported from Middle East, Mediterranean region and India (Pittaway, 1993). The moth chemically camouflages the host and known to steal honey from bee hives. The visual information pertaining to Death's-head Hawk moth's (DHM) caterpillar and its nature of feeding habits are scarce. The present article illustrates the feeding habit of DHM caterpillar in wild. The present observations were recorded at Peppara forest in Trivandrum, India. One solitary caterpillar was observed feeding during the day time on wild growing plants of *Clerodendrum infortunatum*. The visuals were captured using Nikon D3200 during the month of November 2017. Caterpillars of DHM moth grow to a maximum length of 10-12 cm. It appeared to be at third instar having a bright yellow color with light purple blue stripes (Fig.1). The caterpillar has a distinct horn at its rear. The caterpillar was observed voraciously feeding on tender leaves and resting alternatively. Virtually it appears as an eating-machine and gobbles up the leaf to find a new leaf after feeding the one they are on. The adult moth lays single egg on the bottom side of Verbenaceae, Cannabaceae, Oleaceae as hosts (Akkuzu et al., 2007). The DHM caterpillar appears to be very attractive in their size and its vivid colour patterns, are often apparent as fascinating insects by humans.

Reference:

Pittaway, A. R., 1993, Harley Books, London, England, 240.

Akkuzu, E., Ayberk, H., Inac, S., 2007,Journal of Environmental Biology. 28(4): 723-730.



Fig.1: Caterpillar of the Death's-head Hawkmoth (*Acherontia atropos*)