



## RESEARCH NOTE

### Incidence of banana skipper, *Erionota torus* Evans, 1941 (Lepidoptera: Hesperidae) in Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh

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The banana skipper or banana leaf-roller or red eye skipper, *Erionota torus* Evans, 1941 (Lepidoptera: Hesperidae), is a serious defoliator causing huge damage to banana plants in South-East Asia (Chiang-Huwang, 1991). The caterpillar with shiny black head crawls to the leaf edge and make characteristic rolls in which they feed and take shelter and later to emerge as an adult butterfly. *Erionota torus* Evans is superficially very similar to *Erionota thrax* (Linnaeus) with similar geographical distribution in South-East Asia and both are referred as 'banana skipper' (CABI, 2018). Of the seven genera grouped in *Erionota* sub group (Evans, 1949), two species (*E. torus* and *E. thrax*) are reported to cause damage to cultivated banana plants in India. The distribution of both species is reported from different parts of India covering Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, (Padmanaban 2014, Jayanthiet al., 2015, Naik et al., 2016), Kerala (Soumya et al., 2013), Tamil Nadu (Ghorpade and Kunte, 2010; Padmanaban, 2014), Irulandi et al., 2018) Andaman and Nicobar islands (Veenakumari and Mohanraj, 1991), West Bengal (Wynter-Blyth, 1957; Dekaet al., 1996) Madhya Pradesh. In eastern India *E. torus* was reported from Sikkim (Raju et al., 2015). while *E. thrax* was reported from Manipur (Prasad and Singh, 1987; Singh, 1997).

The present article reports the prevalence of banana skipper on banana plants (Fig.1) within an area of four acres of the Arunachal Pradesh Regional Centre, Zoological Survey of India, Senki Valley, Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh. Incidence on banana plants was recorded during August-September 2017. Seventy four plants were surveyed, forty five plants (60.8 %) were found affected. Six plants with one roll/plant and seventy rolls/plant on a single plant were recorded as minimum and maximum number of rolls/plant. The number of leaves (mean) affected/plant was found to be 1.45 and the number of rolls/affected leaf was found to be 7.8. The caterpillars had cut and rolled (as long as 14 cm) the outer leaf edge towards the mid ribs. Caterpillars with black head, narrow neck and pale green body embedded in white waxy powder were photographed

after unrolling the leaf margin rolled by them (Fig.1). The adult specimens deposited in APRC/ZSI Museum (APRC/ZSI/IV/2484) (Fig. 2 & 3).

Ten randomly selected rolls were opened to expose the larvae to measure five morphometric parameters viz., Total length, Head length, Head width and body width and the respective mean  $\pm$  SD values were found to be



Fig.1. Leaf rolls on banana plant in APRC/ZSI Campus

$36.74 \pm 11.93$ ,  $3.31 \pm 3.08$ ,  $3.67 \pm 0.99$  and  $6.88 \pm 0.84$ . Different range of economic damage is reported from south India viz., 100% (Sharanabasappa et al., 2016) and 8-30% (Reddy and Hemadri, 2018), where the species is believed to have expanded its range. However, with high diversity of wild bananas in Arunachal Pradesh, there seems to be no recorded data of *E. torus* in natural ecosystems surveyed. Extensive surveys to establish the pest spread in the region need to be undertaken to assess economic damage if any in horticultural areas where banana is cultivated and if needed initiate management measures.



Fig.2. *E. torus* – Dorsal view



Fig.3. *E. torus* – ventral view

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