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# NEW LARVAL FOOD PLANTS FOR THE COMMON TIGER BUTTERFLY IN INDIA (LEPIDOPTERA: NYMPHALIDAE: DANAINAE)

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During August 1991, while the senior author (NC) was walking along a forest path in the Borivli National Park, Bombay, looking for larvae of various butterflies, he noticed a few leaves eaten by larvae. On closer observation, they were identified as being of the common tiger butterfly Danaus (Salatura) genutia (Cramer). The caterpillars were of different stages (2nd-3rd instars). The plant was a woody climber in bloom and flowers were of a purplish colour inside and silvery pinkish white colour outside, arranged in an axillary umbellate cyme, with a mild fragrance. The plant was collected and later identified as Holostemma annularis K. Schum (Asclepiadaceae). On plucking leaves of this plant, a white latex oozed out which on coming in contact with the air became an elastic residue. Subsequently, on several occasions we observed the common tiger butterfly laying eggs on the leaves of plant. After hatching out, the caterpillar eats the eggshell and then starts feeding on the chlorophyll by cutting a ring on the leaf. As they grow, they begin feeding by cutting along the edges of leaves. The plants under observation were in open scrub vegetation. These plants died by December 1991.

According to Wynter-Blyth (1957), the larvae of common tiger butterflies feed on *Ceropegia intermidia*, a seasonal climber common during monsoon season. However, during our studies in 1992 we also collected the larvae of *D. genutia* on *Ceropegia oculata* Hook, during July-August 1992. During our studies in 1991 we never came across the caterpillar of *D. genutia* on plants of *Calotropis* spp. Though the plants belonging to the genera *Marsdenia* and *Tylophora* were common in our study area, we did not see any larvae of the common tiger butterfly on these plants.

The larvae of *D. genutia* are known to feed on plants belonging to the family Asclepiadaceae: *Ceropegia intermedia* Wight and *Stephanotis floribunda* Brogniart (Wynter-Blyth, 1957); *Cynanchum dalhousiae* Wight (Mackinon and de Niceville, 1897); *Cynanchum liukiuensis* Warb. (Takahashi, 1977); *Raphistemma pulchellum* Wall. and *R. lemma* (Wynter-Blyth, 1957; Sevastopulo, 1973); *Marsdenia tinctoria* Br. and *M. tomentosa* Mogr. & Decne (Takahashi, 1977); *Asclepias curassavica* L. (Takahashi, 1977; Hill and Cheung, 1978; Dixon *et al.*, 1978); *Graphistemma pictum* Champ. (Shirôzu, 1960; Dixon *et al.*, 1978); *Pergularia odoratisimma* Wight (Shirôzu, 1960); *Tylophora cissoides* Blume and *T. tanake* Maxim (Franch. & Sava.) (Shirôzu, 1960; Iwase, 1964).

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