

## PLEURONA FALCATA WALKER, AN ADDITION TO THE NOCTUID FAUNA OF THE INDIAN MAINLAND

In the Indian sub-region, the species *Pleuroona falcata* Walker (Lepidoptera: Noctuidae) has been reported from Burma (Myanmar) and the Andaman Islands (Hampson 1894), but not from the Indian mainland. A single specimen was recorded by this author in the Kumaon Himalaya. The record extends the known distribution of this moth considerably westwards and northwards. It was previously known from tropical areas, but the present record is from c. 29 degrees 20 minutes 43 seconds N.

The following is a description of the specimen:

***Pleuroona*** Walker

1866. Cat. Lep. Het. Brit. Mus. Lond. 35: 564.

***Pleuroona falcata*** Walker

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**Material Examined:** 1 ex.: (female): 20.xi.1998, Jones Estate, Bhimtal, Kumaon 1500 m at MV light. Leg. & coll. Peter Smetacek.

**Forewing Length:** 17 mm.

**Expanse:** 38 mm (Hampson 1894 & mihi).

**Distribution:** Burma, Andamans (Hampson 1894).

**Remarks:** This taxon should not be confused with *Chilkasa falcata* Swinhoe, which Hampson (1894) included under *Pleuroona*, proposing the new name *Pleuroona perhamata*, since *Pleuroona falcata* was preoccupied by the species being discussed here. The genus *Chilkasa* Swinhoe was subsequently resurrected in recent works such as Barlow (1982); hence *Chilkasa falcata* is a valid name but does not refer to the species being discussed here.

The specimen is in perfect condition. It matches the description and Fig. 310 in Hampson (1894) except in the following points:

1. The groundcolour on the *recto* surface is dark purplish-brown, not bright red-brown.
2. On the hindwing *recto*, the series of submarginal specks mentioned by Hampson are part of a crenulate line.
3. On the hindwing *verso*, the medial and postmedial lines are clear and sharply defined, not indistinct.
4. On the hindwing *verso*, the submarginal line is crenulate from the inner margin for two thirds of its length and the remaining third is straight to the costa.

The breeding status of this moth in the Bhimtal valley is uncertain, since this is the only specimen recorded in over two decades of monitoring moth populations at this site. However, it is certainly from a breeding population within Indian borders, since it is inconceivable that the present specimen could have passed its early stages in Myanmar and then traveled to Bhimtal. It is more likely that breeding populations of this moth will be found along the Himalaya, at least as far west as Kumaon, particularly in the Terai and Bhabar zones, since this moth is primarily a tropical species.

It seems that the present specimen was a straggler from low elevation attempting to disperse the species. Its appearance in late November further indicates that it is a low elevation species, since there are very few locally established moths on the wing at that time at 1500 m elevation.

In recent years, a number of typically Indo-Malayan Lepidoptera have been added to the known fauna of the Kumaon Himalaya (Smetacek 1994, 1995, 1998). While the paucity of comparative material from the 19<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries from this area makes it uncertain whether the new records are new arrivals or have been established here since records began, in some cases it has been possible to suggest that some hawkmoths and at least one butterfly (Smetacek 1994, 1995) are recent arrivals. In the case of *Pleurona falcata*, I would venture to suggest that it is a relatively recent arrival, probably sometime during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, since extensive work by a number of workers in the eastern Himalaya and the hills of northeast India during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries failed to discover this moth.

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