

Occurrence of the Lobster Moth Caterpillar in Yeoor Hills, Thane (Maharashtra)

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In September 1999 a very odd looking caterpillar was found in the Yeoor hills (the eastern boundry of Sanjay Gandhi National Park), near Thane city (Maharashtra). This caterpillar was found feeding on *Acacia auriculiformis* and appeared just, as a dry, crumpled fruit of the plant. It was dark chocolate brown with a red streak on either side of the abdomen. When stretched it was about 5 cm. long and about 0.5cm. broad. When disturbed it used to take an amazing posture by holding the twig tightly with four pairs of abdominal sucker feet. It used to raise the head and front part of the body and curve it backwards, while the end of the abdomen used to be raised including the hind most pair of claspers, so that it almost touched the head. It could stand in this posture for a long time. This posture may be defence tactics. Dr. Naresh Chaturvedi from B.N.H.S. identified it as the caterpillar of moth *Stauropus alternus*, belonging to the family Notodontidae (superfamily - Noctuoidea). It is commonly called as Lobster caterpillar.

This species is reported to feed on *Acacia catachu*, *A. dealbata*, *A. decurrens*, *Amherstia nobilis*, *Albizia stipulata*, *Cajanus indicus*, *Camellia theae*, *Cassia fistula*, *C. javanica*, *Grevillea robusta*, *Mangifera indica*, *Ougeinia dalbergiodes*, *Tamarindus indica*, *Trewai nudiflora*, *Xylia dolabriformis*. In South India the caterpillar of *Stauropus alturus* is a pest on pigeon pea, tamarind and *Cassia auriculata*, while in Ceylon it is very minor pest on tea. (Nayar *et al.*, 1976). But according to our knowledge *Acacia auriculiformis* is for first time reported as host plant.

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References:

Nayar, K. K, T. N. Ananthakrishnan, and B. V. David. 1976 *General and applied entomology*. Tata McGraw Hill. pp 263.

