



## Rediscovery of two Darts (Lepidoptera) in Sri Lanka after 90 years

A total of 245 butterfly species (Order Lepidoptera: Papilionoidea) have been recorded from Sri Lanka (d'Abbrera, 1998; Van der Poorten, 2012). Although a listing of 245 species is substantial not all species are common, some may be widespread and uncommon. In particular, *Potanthus* [Hesperiidae] is widespread geographically with three species occurring in Sri Lanka: *P. pallida*, *P. confucius* and *P. pseudomaesa*. According to a recent publication (Jayasinghe, 2013), *P. pallida* and *P. pseudomaesa* are rare in Sri Lanka.

In 1924 W. Ormiston observed *P. pallida* (Indian Dart) and *P. pseudomaesa* (Common Dart) in Sri Lanka and this record was included in Woodhouse (1942). Since 1924, 90 years later, there have been no records of *P. pallida* and *P. pseudomaesa* in Sri Lanka.

The species of Sri Lankan *Potanthus* exhibit very subtle diagnostic traits. According to Ormiston (1924) *P. confucius* and *P. pseudomaesa* are orange in colour and have a different arrangement of spots on the dorsal surface of the wing, *P. pallida* is very similar to *P. pseudomaesa* and the female of *P. pallida* closely resembles the female of *P. pseudomaesa* on the dorsal surface of the wing. Ormiston (1924) provided the following diagnosis for *P. pallida*: “The yellow band is very narrow, and the spots in cell 4 and cell 5 are well separated from both the discal and apical series. There is a spot in cell 7, but none in cell 6. The band on the hindwing is not divided by brown lines. The male has the yellow markings greatly reduced, and the band on the hind wing is broken up by brown lines along the veins. The under-side of the hindwing in both sexes has a distinctive greenish tinge”.

On the other hand *P. pseudomaesa* is a large form in comparison to *P. pallida* and *P. confucius*. Furthermore, *P. pseudomaesa* shows “The yellow band on the forewing is broken, the spots in cells 4 and 5 are not joined to the apical group, but usually to the discal cell in the male, on the lower (hind) wing the band is divided along the veins by brown lines. There is, as a rule, a small well-defined spot in 6, and sometimes a larger faint and diffuse one in cell 7. It varies much in size. In cell 9 the yellow markings are much reduced, and the band on the forewing is more broken, the spots in cells 4 and 5 being almost invariably well separated from both the apical and discal series. On the ventral surface there is usually a very minute spot in 6” (Ormiston, 1924).

During field visits from 2012 to 2014, we discovered and photographed *P. pallida* (Figs. 1 & 2) and *P. pseudomaesa* (Figs. 3 & 4) providing the records of these species in Sri Lanka after a period of 90 years. These are also the first photographs of live specimens for these two species in Sri Lanka. We observed a single individual of *P. pallida* in each of two locations in Sri Lanka. The first observation occurred at the middle of the “Paraviyangala” mountain in Badulla District (6.737400°N, 80.794365°E, 1158 m) on 14 October 2012 at 14:38. The observation was made on a sunny day and in a natural open grassland area. Our second observation was at “Bambarakanda” mountain road in Ratnapura District (6°46'15.40" N, 80°50'6.32" E, 1076 m) on 07 July, 2014. The individual was similarly observed on a sunny day at 10:24 in a disturbed open area. More recently we observed six individuals of *P. pseudomaesa* at the “Dothalugala Nature Trail – Knuckles Mountain Range” in Kandy District (7.336272°N, 80.856397°E; 1175 m) on 14 June, 2014, at 08:12. This observation occurred on a sunny day and in a natural open grassland area.



Figure 1: ventral wing surface of female *P. pallida*



Figure 2: ventral wing surface of male *P. pallida*



Figure 3: dorsal wing surface of male *P. pseudomaesa*



Figure 4: ventral wing surface of male *P. pseudomaesa*

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