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SPOTTED IN ARUNACHAL

Butterfly species found

- [Shiv Sahay Singh](#)



Tiny beautiful butterfly, new to science discovered from North East India. Photo: Special Arrangement

The 15 mm tiny insect has an interesting life cycle.

Scientists have discovered a tiny butterfly in Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh. It is 15 mm in size and has been named Banded Tit *Hypolycaena narada*.

Kurshnamegh Kunte of the National Centre of Biological Sciences, Bengaluru, who discovered the species, said: "Butterflies are supposed to be well-known, and most of the species are discovered in India. Therefore, finding a new species is really surprisingly."

What is more interesting is wildlife enthusiasts had photographed the species a few years ago.

A four-member team had visited the Namdapha Tiger Reserve in Arunachal Pradesh in 2009 and photographed this species for the first time. "We found this butterfly and thought it was different from the other commonly found butterflies. We shared the photographs with Dr. Kunte," said Arjan Basu Roy, one of the team members.

Dr. Kunte said it was a unique example of how wildlife enthusiasts could contribute to science in their own way.

Vijay Barve, founder of ButterflyIndia Yahoo Group, a virtual platform for butterfly lovers in the country, said that butterfly enthusiasts came together in 2001 and data on butterfly started pouring in from all corners. "We started with 25 members, and the number has now increased to 1,500," Mr. Barve said.

The members have learnt from one another, have undertaken butterfly expeditions and organised Butterfly India Meet.

Banded Tit is found in the low-level evergreen forests of Changlang and has an interesting life cycle, in which the adult lives just for two weeks.

"The butterfly has now been described and named, but much of its biology is still a mystery. For instance, its larval host plants, breeding behaviour and precise habitat requirements are unknown," Dr. Kunte said.

The discovery has once again spotlighted Eastern Himalayas as a bio-diversity hotspot.

"With such a discovery, the place is getting hotter. The Banded Tit discovery raises the possibility that many more species that are new to science still remain to be discovered in the remote mountain ranges and forests of North-eastern India," Dr. Kunte said.

