

Biodiversity Record: An ant brood parasite moth of the genus *Niphopyralis* at Yishun

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Subject: Ant brood parasite moth, *Niphopyralis* sp. (Insecta: Lepidoptera: Crambidae: Wurthiinae).

Subject identified by: Nagabhushan Jyothi on the Facebook group, 'Microlepidoptera of South-Asia'.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Yishun Avenue 1; 19 May 2021; 2130 hrs.

Habitat: Edge of a patch of secondary forest next to a housing estate.

Observer: Marcus F. C. Ng.

Observation: One example with an estimated wingspan of 18 mm (Fig. 1) was found at the edge of the forest, on the surface of a leaf about a metre off the ground. This moth was tolerant to being touched and did not move or fly away.



Fig. 1. Dorso-lateral (left) and dorsal (right) views of the ant brood parasite moth in situ. (Photograph by: Marcus F. C. Ng).

Remarks: The larvae of *Niphopyralis* and its close relatives are associated with ants (see Robinson et al., 1994). This is a common feature of butterflies in the families Lycaenidae and Riodinidae, but unusual among moths. One species, *Niphopyralis aurivillii*, has been found in nests of *Polyrhachis bicolor* on coffee plants in Java, where the caterpillars prey on the ant eggs and larvae, but are not attacked by the ants (Kemner, 1923, as *Wurthia aurivillii*). Robinson et al. (1994) illustrate a *Niphopyralis* sp. that has been recorded from Singapore, but it is uncertain if the featured example is conspecific. The individual herein illustrated probably cannot be identified to species without dissection. It was found near a number of weaver ant nests, which may have been its larval sites. Its pale forewings, with obscure light brownish blotches, may serve to mimic bird droppings.

Literature cited:

- Kemner NA (1923) Hyphaenosymphilie, eine neue merkwürdige art von myrmekophilie bei einem neuen myrmekophilen schmetterling (*Wurthia aurivillii* n. sp.) aus Java beobachtet. Archiv für Zoologi, 15: 1–28.
- Robinson GS, Tuck KR & Shaffer M (1994) A Field Guide to the Smaller Moths of South-East Asia. Malaysian Nature Society, Kuala Lumpur, 335 pp.