

Biodiversity Record: An additional hostplant for the copper flash butterfly

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Subjects: Copper flash, *Rapala pheretima sequeira* (Insecta: Lepidoptera: Lycaenidae);
Weaver ant, *Oecophylla smaragdina* (Insecta: Hymenoptera: Formicidae);
Indian rosewood, *Dalbergia latifolia* (Angiosperms: Fabales: Fabaceae).

Subjects identified by: Simon Kee Mun Chan.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, Yishun Pond Park; 24 March 2025; around 1657 hrs.

Habitat: Urban parkland.

Observer: Simon Kee Mun Chan.

Observation: On the hot afternoon, a green-patterned caterpillar of about 2.3 cm was observed feeding on the foliage of an Indian rosewood bush (Fig. 1). At least four weaver ants were crawling around and on the caterpillar (Figs. 2–5). They appeared to be tending to the caterpillar, apparently protecting it. To ascertain the species of butterfly, the author removed the caterpillar and reared it to metamorphosis. It morphed into a pupa after four days (Fig. 6). The adult butterfly emerged after another 10 days (Fig. 7) and was released back into the area where the caterpillar was found.



Fig. 1. Indian rosewood on which the caterpillar was found (Photograph by: Simon Kee Mun Chan).

Remarks: The copper flash is a moderately common butterfly in Singapore that frequents urban gardens and parks, as well as forested areas. It is a small species with a forewing length of 18–20 mm, and its larvae is known to feed on

Hibiscus tiliaceus, *Syzygium zeylanicum*, *Mangifera indica*, and *Mallotus paniculatus* (see Khew, 2015). This record adds *Dalbergia latifolia* to the range of hostplants for the copper flash. The larvae of many species of Lycaenidae have symbiotic relationship with ants (see Khew, 2015). This record shows that the larva of the copper flash is one of these, and that it associates with the weaver ant.



Figs. 2–5. The caterpillar on the Indian rosewood with weaver ants. It moved slowly along the branches with one of the ants riding on its back (Photographs by: Simon Kee Mun Chan).



Fig. 6. Dorsal view of the pupa, about 1.6 cm in length, attached to the inside of the cover of the rearing box.

Fig. 7. Lateral view of the eclosed adult copper flash. Forewing length about 2 cm.

(Photographs by: Simon Kee Mun Chan)

Literature cited:

Khew SK (2015) A Field Guide to the Butterflies of Singapore. 2nd edition. Ink On Paper Communications Pte Ltd, Singapore, xxv + 375 pp.