

SCIENTIFIC NOTES

NEW PESTS OF KESSERU, *HETEROPANAX FRAGRANS* (ROXB.) SEEM A PERENNIAL HOST PLANT OF ERI SILKWORM, *SAMIA RICINI* (DONOVAN)**M. C. Sarmah*, S. A. Ahmed* and B. N. Sarkar***

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[Sarmah, M. C., Ahmed, S. A. & Sarkar, B. N. 2013. New pests of Kesseru, *Heteropanax fragrans* (Roxb.) Seem a perennial host plant of Eri Silkworm, *Samia ricini* (Donovan). *Munis Entomology & Zoology*, 8 (2): 900-901]

The eri silkworm, *Samia ricini* (Donovan) is multivoltine and polyphagous in nature feeding on a number of host plants namely Castor, *Ricinus communis*, Kesseru, *Heteropanax fragrans*, Tapioca, *Manihot utilissima*, Payam, *Evodia flaxinifolia*, Barpat, *Ailanthus grandis*, Borkesseu, *Ailanthus excels* and several others. Kesseru (*Heteropanax fragrans*, Seem) belongs to Ginseng family Araliaceae. It ranks second among all the food plant of eri silkworm *Samia ricini* (Donovan) next to castor. It is perennial in nature and is widely distributed in the North Eastern States of India, both in wild and cultivated condition. Kesseru plants grow up to 1000 m MSL. Kesseru leaves are coarse and fibrous. The Kesseru fed eri cocoons are compact and take more time for degumming during spinning. Actually, Kesseru is used as an alternative food plant of eri silkworm during shortage of castor leaves. Kesseru is used as the best alternative food plant for eri silkworm rearing (Phukan, 2006). It is widely distributed in the North Eastern States of India, both in wild and cultivated condition. Kesseru is extensively utilized under developmental scheme of Govt. of India, like augmentation of eri food plant programme at farmers level in the North Eastern region of India.

Kesseru is less susceptible to disease and pest. Occasionally, pest like termite and a nocturnal beetle caused damage to kesseru (Sarmah, 2004). There are different genotype of Kesseru exist in nature. So far, 10 accessions of kesseru viz., HF 001, HF 002, HF 001, HF 003, HF 004, HF 005, HF 006, HF 007, HF 008, HF 009 and HF 010 has been identified and maintained in the Germplasm Bank of Central Muga Eri Research & Training Institute at Chenijan, Assam (Fig. 1).

During regular monitoring of diseases and pests of Kesseru in different seasons a new Pyralid Lepidopteran pest leafroller (Fig. 3) has been identified infesting kesseru foliage causing 100% defoliation (Fig. 2) out of 2% plantation of HF002 accession. Another, new pest of Brown Bug, *Agonoscellis nubile* Fab. (Hemiptera: Pentatomidae) infesting on Kesseru, *Heteropanax fragrans* (Roxb.) Seem recorded during summer season (Fig. 4).

LITERATURE CITED

Phukan, J. C. D., Sarmah, M. C., Kakati, P. K. & Chakravorty, R. 2006. Kesseru, *Heteropanax fragrans* (Roxb.) Seem – An Important Perennial Food Plant of Eri Silkworm, Lead papers and abstracts, National Workshop on “Eri food plants” held on 11-12th October, 2006 by CMER & TI, Lahdoigarh. Pp. 50-61.

Sarmah, M. C. 2004. Eri host plant cultivation and silkworm rearing technique. Compiled & Edited by Sarmah, M. C. Published by the Director CMER & TI, Lahdoigarh, Jorhat, Assam.



Figures 1-2. 1) Kesseru plantation, 2) A defoliated kesseru infested by Leafroller.



Figures 3-4. 3) Pest on the leaves, 4) Brown Bug, *Agonoscellis nubile* Fab.