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BIODIVERSITY EXPLORATION OF WILD SILKMOTHS' HOST PLANTS IN NAGALAND, NE INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The study is an attempt to explore the biodiversity of wild silkmoths' host plants in Nagaland (25°26′-27°40′ N-93°20′-95°15′ E), a small mountainous state of North East India. This biodiversity rich area is found to home 16 species of wild silkmoths under 9 genera which is reported to feed on 23 varieties of host plants belonging to 13 families. However, only three varieties of wild silkmoths, *viz*., eri, muga and tasar are commercially exploited in Nagaland and their wild counterparts freely thrive in the wild state. Most of the wild silkmoths are polyphagous in nature, *i.e.*, *Antheraea assamensis* primarily feeds on 4 host plants, *Antheraea roylei* on 5, *Antheraea proylei* on 4, *Attacus atlas* on 3, *Actias selene* on 6, *Cricula trifenestrata* on 3, *Samia ricini* on 4 and *Samia canningi* on 9, while *Antherea* sp. novo. and *Theophila religiosa* are reported to feed on only one host plant each. Except for a few host plants, which are site specific, others are distributed throughout Nagaland.

Key words: Host plant, Nagaland, wild silkmoth.