ABSTRACT
Larval food preference and developmental stages of yellow coester butterfly, *Parasa vesta* Fabricius, were observed particularly in *Dregeaena sacciformis* (D.C.), in the valleys of Great Himalayan National Park.

INTRODUCTION
Nymphalids are widely distributed and richly represented in Himalayan region. Globally 14 subfamilies are recorded of which 10 are found in Indian region. Out of the total number of butterflies in the world one third are Nymphalidae (Harbital, 1992). The yellow coester butterfly, *Parasa vesta* is the member of subfamily Acraeinae and only two species are recorded in Indian region and both are small and highly diversified found in Himalaya.

Butterflies help in cross pollination and the distribution of butterflies depend on the availability of the preferred food plant. The association between butterflies and plants is highly specific. There are few butterfly species which are associated with the grasslands, grassy clearings in woods and open grassland habitat in Himalaya. (Uniyal and Mahra, 1996). The adult potential stages of yellow coester butterfly were observed only on *Dregeaena sacciformis* in the valleys of Great Himalayan National Park.

Study area
The observation site selected for the present study lies between the elevation of 1500 to 2000m, in Tirthan Valley of the Great Himalayan National Park (GHNP) situated between Lat. 31°38'15" and 31°49'41" North and Long 77°59'76" to 77°49'76" East in Kullu district of Himachal Pradesh. About one third of the park area supports closed canopy forest representing five broad forest types.

Observations
The black and small hairy monophagous larvae were first observed in the month of February 1996 on the leaves of *Dregeaena sacciformis* of family Urticaceae, it is a good fodder plant in this region. A soft hairy evergreen shrub, with broad to narrow lanceolate sharply toothed alternate leaves which are densely white-waxy beneath. It is found up to 2500m, elevation in Himalaya. In autumn it is full of yellow to orange raspberry like edible fruits. The plants are dioecious (Polunin and Staniton, 1998).

Weekly larval observations were made at different sites. After about 6 months duration all the larvae turn into slightly yellowish white patch on its dorsal side and are visible only when larvae are fully straggled. The larvae are clothed with 50 to 50 black to brown bristles and about 3 to 3.5 cm, in length and feed on the leaves.

When the larvae are ready to pupate, it attaches to the leaf with silky pad and pupas have yellow and black bands on it. After a period of rest it start undulating movement from tail up. On the basis of the morphology of pupa it is very easy to distinguish the pupa of yellow coester from other species. The pupa is pale pink at first, slowly black and orange dot starts appearing, and by the end of the day the pupa turns to light pink with black and orange.

The pupa takes 7-10 days to emerge into adult. The details of wing markings, head, eye, can be observed even before emergence. The pupa splits open on the back, the butterfly crawls out of it and finds a suitable resting place, and ready to fly in search of food and mates. After a short flight it comes back to rest on the same plant. The adults mate and reproduce. The first emerged yellow coester are open in first week of June. The eggs are small round and yellow in colour.

The adult yellow coester butterfly is yellowish dark veins with a wing span of 6-8 cm. It has a very short flight range.

REFERENCES