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Caption: Large Indian Civet *Viverra zibetha*, Tricoloured Munia *Lonchura malacca* and *Hoya wightii* (Medium—pencil crayon on watercolour paper) © Supriya Samanta.

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REPLY

If habitat heterogeneity is effective for conservation of butterflies in urban landscapes of Delhi, India? Unethical publication based on data manipulation: Response of original authors

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Das & Singh (2021) published a paper representing serious flaws, forgery, and data manipulation in the paper published in the same journal in 2021 by Paul & Sultana, which may have led to an inadvertent understanding developed by Das & Singh (2021). Therefore, through this communication, below-mentioned facts and circumstances are shared which should resolve the queries raised by Das & Singh (2021).

The title of the original paper is "**Is** habitat heterogeneity effective for conservation of butterflies in urban landscapes of Delhi, India?" and not "**If** habitat heterogeneity is effective for conservation of butterflies in urban landscapes of Delhi, India?" which totally changes the concept of the paper.

1. Thesis is objective based writing as per the guidelines of the University whereas paper writing is solely an exclusive style of concept presentation by the author. The data presented in the paper were not included in the thesis as they don't comply with the objectives of the thesis. Such raw reanalysed data were published in the paper (Paul & Sultana 2021). This paper was updated with new idea and improved by the considered comments and suggestions of reviewers. Authors agree that in the thesis (Paul 2019) the word microhabitat was used which are in fact small specialised 'habitats' only within a larger habitat. It is clearly mentioned in the study area and methodology section that three random transects were laid at each six different sites and habitats were sampled on those transects only. The data were collected on different habitats on different transects at these sites. Those habitats were pooled together irrespective of sites because the objective was to check the effect of habitat heterogeneity on butterfly species and accordingly diversity indices were calculated after normalising data only. The unequal sample size can be standardised for the analyses. The data were collected on different scales, so it was transformed to normalise and thus reduced the heteroscedasticity. These lines of action are prerequisite before analyses, so they were not mentioned in the paper. The mentioned paper (Paul & Sultana 2020) comprised totally different objective and not dealt with habitats therefore should not be seen as repetition.

2. The data were collected and was available with first author and it was utilised to calculate diversity indices. Diversity indices were calculated habitat wise for 'Pollard walk' method. That's why the diversity indices were '0' for the 'Artificial light' as only one species was found, and it was sampled by other type of study which is clearly mentioned in the paper. Transects were laid at different sites not in different habitats (mentioned in methodology). Nine habitats were identified on these transects at different sites. So as mentioned in Table 3, bird droppings were present at all sites. *Melanitis leda* was sighted in dense forested habitat throughout the day.

3. Artificial light is considered a microhabitat/ habitat by many researchers (Usman 1956; Donahue 1962; Shull 1964; Shull & Nadkerny 1967; Sharma &

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Chaturvedi 1999; Nair 2001; Sharma & Chaturvedi 2005; Chowdhury & Soren 2011). The diagram was accordingly presented in the paper which was somehow not considered in the thesis and therefore should not be considered as tampered. It may be noted that many other views of reviewers are also incorporated in the paper in general to further bring new ideas. Figure 2 shows data in a graphical mode with species name only whereas Table 2 represents numerical data which is not reflected in Figure 2 and therefore should not be seen as duplication. Generalist and specialist butterflies name have not been included in the paper as the scope of the paper is always limited in any journal. It is not written anywhere in the paper that species found in flowerbeds and grass are specialist so should not be seen as misinterpretation of data. The actual percent overlapping among various habitats are clearly mentioned in Table 2. The independent sharing was calculated for overlapping of different habitats in terms of species shared and it was not calculated for the species. The percentage sharing of habitats (Table 2) between artificial light and Hedges/crops/bushes was 2.5%. Coincidentally, *Melanitis leda* was the only butterfly species found in the artificial light during the study, Similar kind of sharing was shown by other habitats too like between trees and Hedges/crops/bushes for *Colotis fausta*.

4. The raw data were reanalysed to discuss the effectiveness of habitat heterogeneity for conservation of butterfly species in urban landscape. Das & Singh (2021) were right that in the thesis the preference of habitat was discussed in terms of number of sightings but in the paper the authors have discussed the diversity of butterfly species, i.e., number of species which was considered as new idea. The flowerbeds were absent in the randomly transect laid in Northern Ridge and discussion was based on results only. Das & Singh (2021) may be right in saying that flowerbeds must be present in Northern Ridge.

COVID 19 statement should not be considered as mere speculation but may be seen as increasing the scope of study in urban centres for butterflies as have been published for other faunal species (Rutz et al. 2020; Gilby et al. 2021) during lockdown.

5. The first author sincerely apologizes to her supervisor and co-supervisor for not bringing the manuscript to their knowledge before publication. She had some hearing mistake while having verbal discussion with her Ph.D. supervisor to publish the research papers without their names in the authorship. However, the first author thoroughly acknowledged everyone (including both of her supervisors) who so ever helped her during her Ph.D. work in her thesis. It happened unintentionally and first author sincerely apologizes for her mistake. The co-author of the original paper provided all technical contribution to the paper for publication and therefore became co-author as per the desire of the first author.

In the light of the above facts and circumstances these issues should be closed with learning for the co-author to think before extending any support and help to students to avoid such unnecessary controversies.

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