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Cover: A Southern Rockhopper Penguin *Eudyptes chrysocome* stands on Tussock Grass on Westpoint Island. Painted in poster colors, this artwork is a reproduction of a photograph by Phillip Colla. Thanks to the photographer for the original image. © Pooja Patil.



First record of the ladybird beetle *Novius pumilus* (Weise, 1892) (Coleoptera: Coccinellidae: Noviini) from West Bengal, India, with notes on its ecology

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Ladybird beetles (Coleoptera: Coccinellidae), also known as ladybugs, and ladybeetles, constitute a popular, and significant group of insects with an outstanding economic perspective. At present, over 6,000 species of ladybirds under 360 genera are described worldwide (Ślipiński 2007). More than 400 species of ladybirds, representing 79 genera, and 22 tribes, are currently present in the Indian subcontinent (Poorani 2002). The coccinellid fauna of India is widespread and diversified. The state of West Bengal is rich in biodiversity and plays a crucial role in enriching ladybird diversity. The varied habitats from the Sundarban mangrove forests to the foothills of the Himalaya offer a special home for an array of ladybird beetles. The tribe Noviini is among the most economically important groups in Coccinellidae, with only a single genus, *Novius* Mulsant, 1846 (Pang et al. 2020). Members of this tribe are mainly predators of giant scales belonging to the family Monophlebidae and occasionally, mealybugs (Pseudococcidae). A perusal of the history of biological control revealed that the successful utilization of ladybird beetles was made when an epidemic plague of cottony cushion scale, *Icerya purchasi* Maskell, threatened the orange production in California. As a remedy to the threat imposed by the scale insects, a ladybeetle, *Novius cardinalis* (Mulsant, 1850)

(= *Rodolia cardinalis* Mulshant, 1850), was imported to California from Australia in 1888, and was successfully augmented, and utilized for the management of the scale insect (Doutt 1958). At present, 17 species of the genus *Novius* have been documented from the Indian subcontinent (Poorani 2023). According to Poorani (2023), four species of this genus (*amabilis*, *breviusculus*, *fumidus*, and *ruficollis*) are predominant in West Bengal. *Novius pumilus* (Weise, 1892), which was previously reported from Punjab and Uttarakhand, is documented for the first time from West Bengal, India. Morphology of this ladybird *N. pumilus*, has been described significantly by earlier researchers (Ren et al. 2009; Pang et al. 2020; Poorani 2023). Therefore, the morphological attributes of the mentioned ladybird are not reiterated here. Detailed photographs of the habitus, male genitalia, and certain body parts that govern the taxonomic identity of *N. pumilus*, along with brief notes, are provided.

On 24 December 2021, adults and pupae of the ladybird *N. pumilus* were procured from rose plantations at AB Block Farm (Kalyani Municipality) of Bidhan Chandra Krishi Viswavidyalaya (22.990° N, 88.425° E) where adults were observed preying upon *Icerya aegyptiaca* (Douglass 1890) (Figures 1, 2 & 3). During fortnightly visits (January–December 2023) to the

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jackfruit orchard of ICAR-AICRP on fruits at the Mondouri Farm (Haringhata Municipality) of Bidhan Chandra Krishi Viswavidyalaya (22.936° N, 88.508° E), larvae, pupae, and adults of this ladybird beetle were also recorded, and both larvae, and adults were observed preying upon *Icerya seychellarum* (Westwood, 1855) (Figures 1, 4 & 5).

Both Kalyani Municipality and Haringhata Municipality, located in the Nadia District of West Bengal, serve as important habitats for the newly recorded *N. pumilus* in the region. Despite their differences in urbanization, Kalyani being a more planned urban township and Haringhata having a predominantly rural agricultural character, both municipalities share ecological conditions favourable for the establishment of *N. pumilus*. Specifically, both areas provide environments that support the prey species of *N. pumilus*, various scale insects such as *Icerya* species, which are common pests in agricultural, and semi-urban landscapes. The

presence of these pests creates an opportunity for *N. pumilus* to thrive as a natural biological control agent in these areas.

Additionally, the detection of *N. pumilus* in these two distinct yet geographically close municipalities underscores the beetle's adaptability to varied ecological settings within the Nadia District, indicating its potential utility in integrated pest management across both urban, and rural agricultural systems in West Bengal.

Species identification was accomplished using a stereomicroscope Zeiss Stemi 508. Images were captured using the smartphone Samsung S22 Ultra attached to the eyepiece of the stereomicroscope. Later, the image stacking was conducted in Adobe Photoshop 2024 and arranged in CorelDRAW 2018. Genitalia dissection was carried out following the methodology described by Majerus (1994). The terminology used for genitalia and other aspects of adult morphology mostly adheres to Ślipiński (2007).

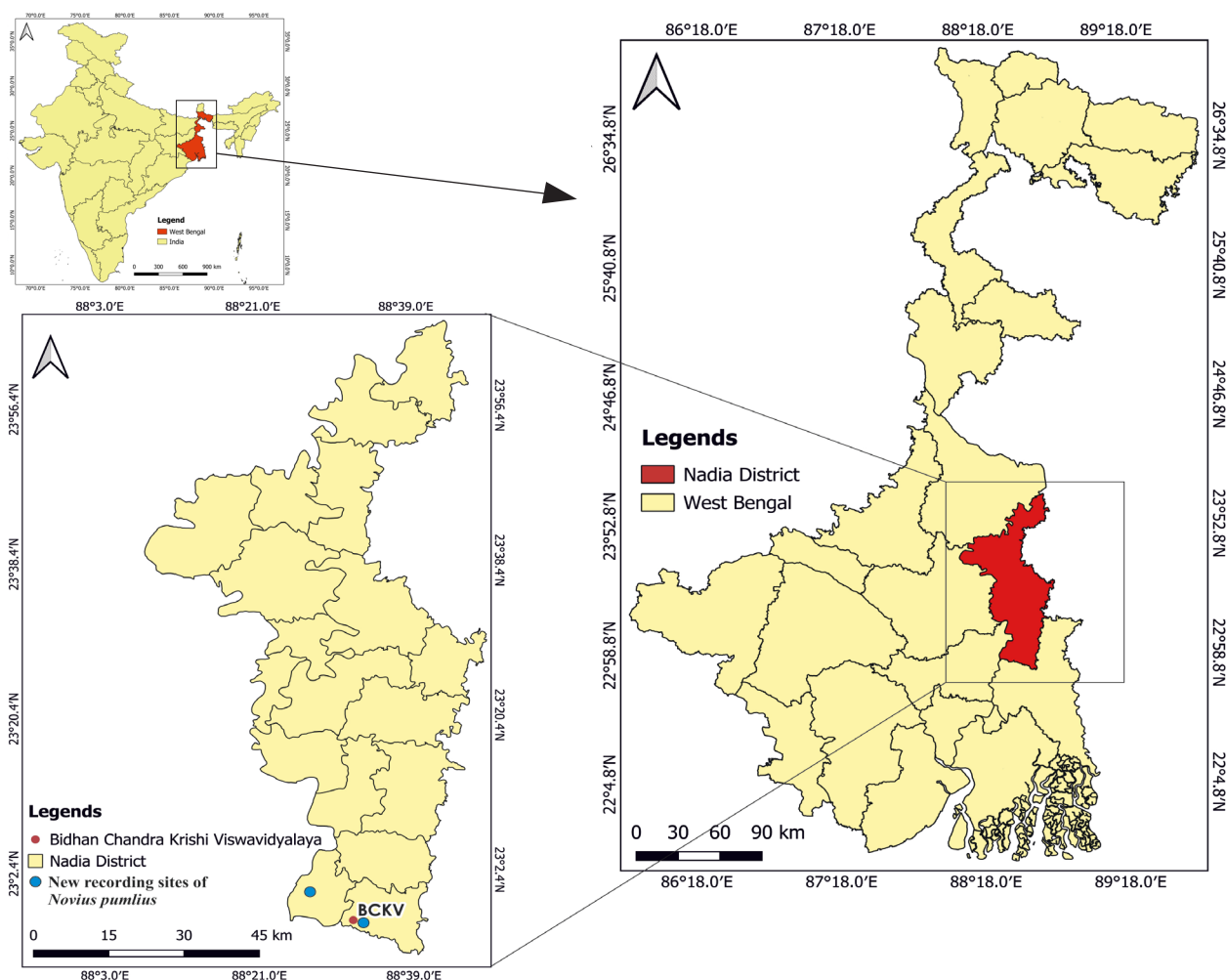


Image 1. Recorded locations of *Novius pumilus* (Weise, 1892) in West Bengal.

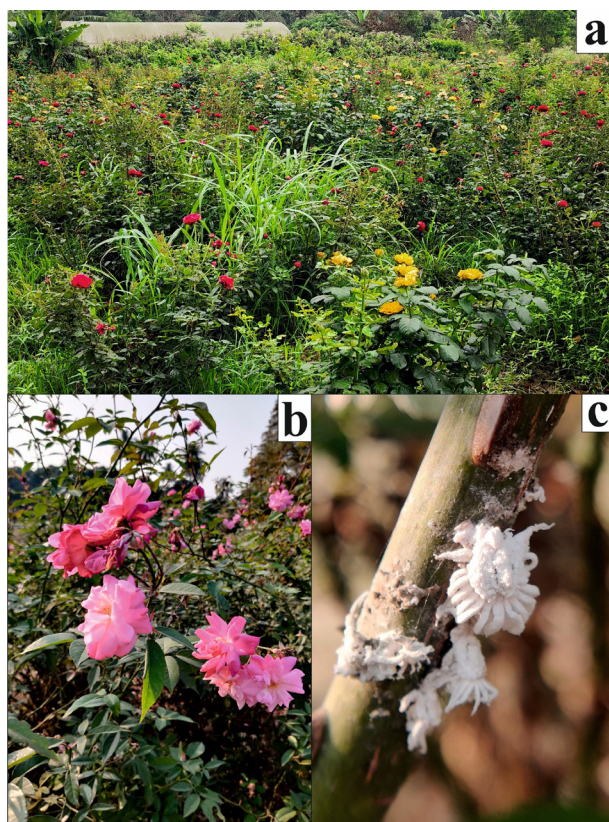


Image 2. a,b—Rose plantations | c—*Icerya aegyptiaca* (Douglass, 1890) infestations on rose. © T. Majumder.



Image 3. a,b—*Novius pumilus* (Weise, 1892) feeding on *Icerya aegyptiaca* (Douglass, 1890) | c—Pupae on rose leaf | d—Eclosing adult on rose leaf. © T. Majumder.

Novius pumilus (Weise, 1892)

Distribution: India: Punjab (PAU, Ludhiana); Uttarakhand; West Bengal (AB Block Farm in Kalyani, Mondouri Farm in Haringhata).

Diagnosis: Dorsal side of the body is orange in colour while ventral side is reddish-brown, broad, oval-shaped, convex, dorsum with dense greyish pubescence (Image 6). Head light brown in colour except rear end of the frons which is dark pitchy brown (Image 7). Pronotum with dense pubescence (Image 6). Eyes oval, densely faceted, interocular distance about 1.25x of the width of an eye (Image 6; 7). Elytral epipleuron broad without foveae (Image 7). Prosternal intercoxal process trapezoidal [Image 6]. Abdominal postcoxal line is complete and semicircular shaped (Image 7). Male genitalia (Image 7) as illustrated, tegmen (Image 7) stout; penis guide in dorsal view and ventral view as long as parameres, paramere gently curved on basal portion in lateral view and strongly curved on basal portion in dorsal view with dense setae on the inner side and distal end; penis guide in dorsal view (Image 7) mostly wider at base, gradually narrowing towards acuminate apex; penis guide in lateral view (Image 7), widest at

the basal portion, then gradually tapering towards the apex, and slightly curved at the end. Penis stout, long, greatly curved, and coil shaped with a well-defined penis capsule; penis capsule with short outer arm, and long inner arm; penis apex unmodified gradually narrowing towards tip and forming a thread-like structure at the end (Image 7).

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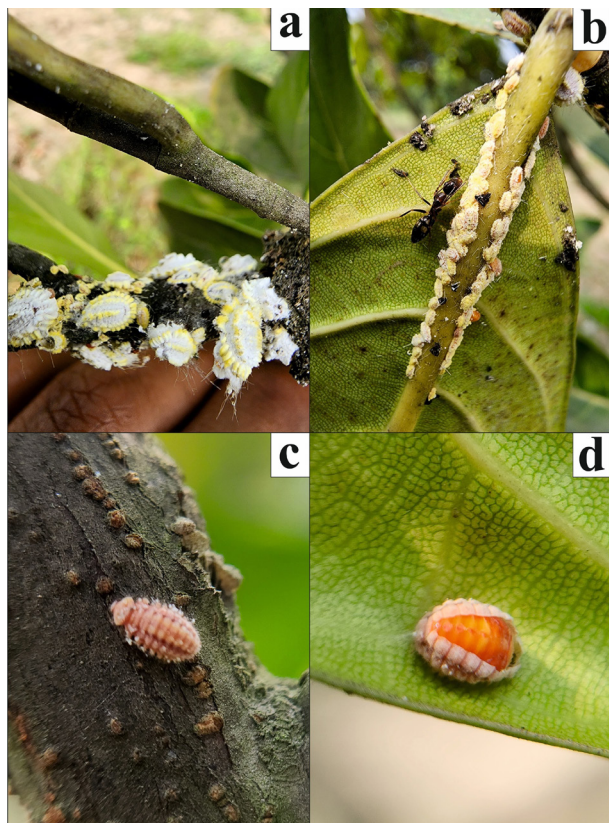


Image 4. a,b—*Icerya seychellarum* (Westwood, 1855) on jackfruit | c—Larva on jackfruit | d—Pupa on jackfruit leaf. © T. Majumder.

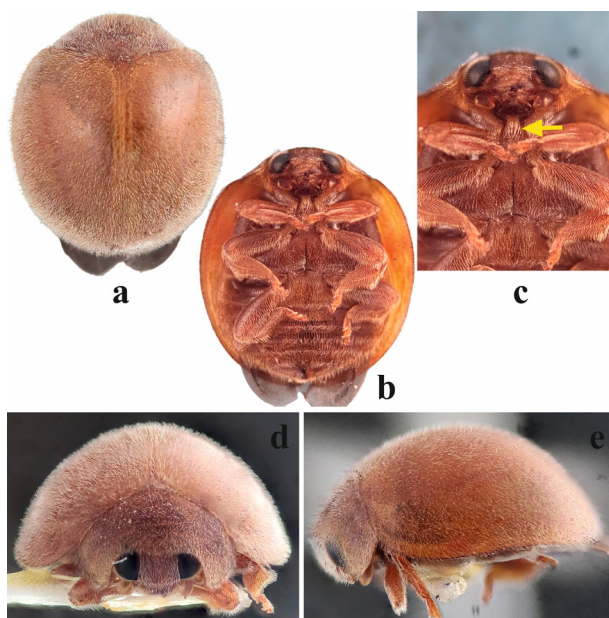


Image 6. *Novius pumilus* (Weise, 1892): a—Adult (dorsal view) | b—Adult (ventral view) | c—Prosternum & mesoventrite | d—Adult (frontal view) | e—Adult (lateral view). © T. Majumder.

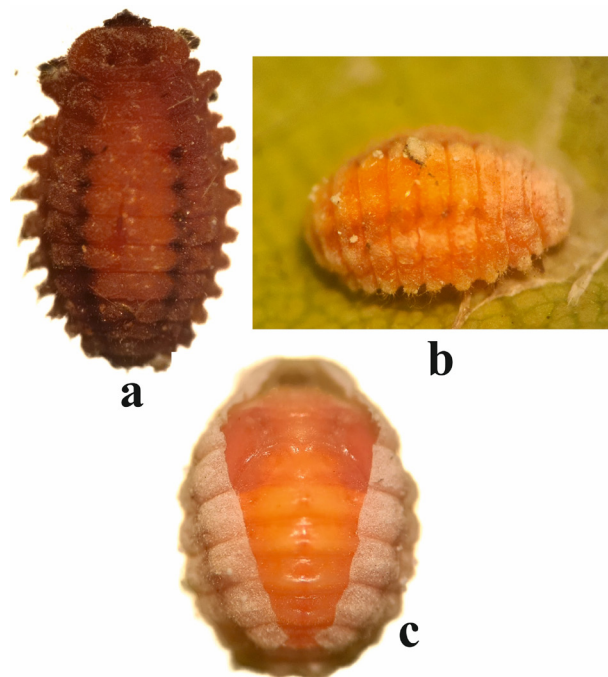


Image 5. *Novius pumilus* (Weise, 1892): a—Larva | b—Larva undergoing pupal stage | c—Pupa. © T. Majumder.

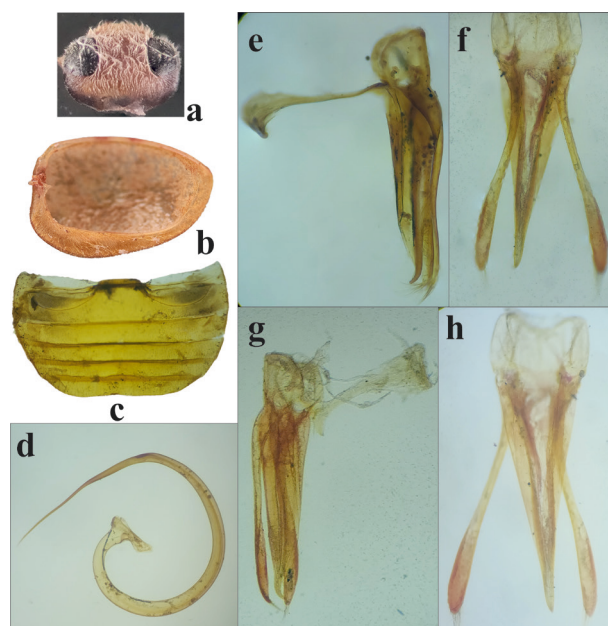


Image 7. Diagnostic characters of *Novius pumilus* (Weise, 1892): a—Head (dorsal view) | b—Elytral epipleuron | c—Abdomen | d—Penis | e, g—Tegmen (lateral view) | f—Tegmen (dorsal view) | h—Tegmen (ventral view). © T. Majumder.

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