

Impact of Weather Parameters on Seasonal Incidence of Oriental Armyworm, *Mythimna separata* (Lepidoptera; Noctuidae) Infesting Maize Ecosystem in North Kashmir

ABSTRACT

The investigation on seasonal incidence of oriental armyworm, *Mythimna separata* was conducted at the Faculty of Agriculture, Wadura SKUAST-K. Shalimar composite-6 maize variety was cultivated during 2021 under the standard practices for Kashmir valley, recommended by SKUAST-K. The pest activity during the crop growth period was monitored by using light traps and visual observations. Findings revealed that adult *M. separata* on maize emerged in the 18th standard meteorological week (SMW) with its peak in the 24th week and remained active until the 37th week. Similarly, armyworm caterpillars appeared in the 19th to 37th SMW and reached their peak in the 29th week in the maize ecosystem during 2021. Moreover, the percentage of infestation during the Kharif season was found to be minimum 10 per cent in the 19th SMW, reaching its peak 63 per cent in the 29th SMW. The infestation gradually decreased and persisted for eight weeks, with 10 per cent infestation in the 37th SMW. Relationship between adult and weather parameters shows positive correlation with maximum temperature ($r = 0.14$) and negative correlation with minimum temperature ($r = -0.22$), morning R.H ($r = -0.52^*$) and evening RH ($r = -0.47^*$). However, *M. separata* populations showed significant negative association with rainfall ($r = -0.51^*$). Correlations drawn between important weather parameters with the larvae of *M. separata* shows significant positive correlation with maximum temperature ($r = 0.60^{**}$) and minimum temperature ($r = 0.56^{**}$), while morning R.H ($r = -0.36$) evening RH ($r = -0.29$) showed negative association and rainfall ($r = -0.16$) also exhibited negative association with the larval infestation of *M. separata* during Kharif 2021. The study on percentage infestation also demonstrated a significant positive correlation with maximum temperature ($r = 0.47^*$) and minimum temperature ($r = 0.53^*$), while morning relative humidity ($r = -0.22$) and evening relative humidity ($r = -0.29$) showed negative associations. Rainfall ($r = -0.20$) displayed a negative correlation with the percentage infestation of *M. separata* during the Kharif season in 2021.

Keywords: Maize, *Mythimna separata*, seasonal incidence, weather parameters

INTRODUCTION

Maize (*Zea mays* L.) holds the global top-ranking among food crops, followed closely by wheat and rice, and is renowned for its versatility across various agro-ecological locations worldwide [18]. Termed a 'miracle crop' due to its extensive economic applications, maize serves as a vital industrial raw material for the production of glucose, starch, dextrin, corn

flakes, corn oil, and meets nutritional needs [2]. Additionally, maize contributes to the production of pharmaceuticals and alcoholic beverages, and its cobs find utility in various applications such as cleaning, brushing, polishing, and serving as carriers for pesticides, rubber compounds, and tires [1]. In India, maize allocation includes 28 per cent for food, 11 per cent for livestock feed, 48 per cent for poultry feed, 12 per cent in the wet milling industry (starch and oil production), and 1 per cent as seed. Referred to as the 'Queen of cereals' maize boasts the highest yield potential among cereal crops globally, playing a crucial role in addressing food security concerns, especially in countries like India with burgeoning populations [18]. In India, maize cultivation serves various purposes, encompassing human consumption, cattle and poultry feed, food processing and the extraction of starch, dextrose, corn syrup, and corn oil [8]. Maize with its composition of approximately 72 per cent starches, 10 per cent protein and 4 per cent fat, supplying an energy density of 365 Kcal/100 g, faces challenges from a myriad of pests, including insects, nematodes, mites, birds and rodents. As many as 141 insect pests cause varying degrees of damage to maize from sowing to harvest, with Kashmir valley experiencing cultivation challenges under rainfed conditions. Biotic stresses, particularly insect pests, contribute to a 15.6 per cent loss in yield in Kashmir. Maize is attacked by 140 different insect species, with only 12 species identified as serious pests causing damage throughout the cultivation and storage stages [3, 17]. Among these pests, *M. separata* (Walker) emerges as a significant threat to cereal crops and pasture grasses in East Asia, Southeast Asia, Eastern Australia, and certain Pacific Islands [16,5]. This pest, causing intermittent outbreaks at high densities, leads to complete yield loss [22, 21]. Considering the significance of the maize crop and the economic losses incurred due to *M. separata* during the kharif season, this study aims to investigate the population dynamics of *M. separata* in relation to weather parameters. The goal is to understand seasonal distribution, activity patterns, polyphagous nature, host and habitat finding behaviour in correlation with fluctuations in abiotic weather parameters. The study also seeks to propose precautionary measures to prevent pest outbreaks during the cropping season.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The investigation was carried out at the Faculty of Agriculture, SKUAST-K Wadura during 2021 to evaluate the percent infestation, adult and larval population of *M. separata* and their correlation with weather parameters *viz.* (Temperature, Humidity, and Rainfall) in maize ecosystem. Maize variety Shalimar composite-6 was planted, according to the standard package of techniques recommended by SKUAST-K for the Kashmir valley. Ten plants were randomly selected from each selected plot for the observations of larval incidence and percent infestation were taken weekly through entire cropping season.

Percent infestation was calculated by using the formula given below:

$$\text{Per cent infestation} = \frac{\text{No. of infested plants}}{\text{Total no of plants}} \times 100$$

Light traps were set up for monitoring the nocturnal moth from dusk to morning in order to study the adult population of *M. separata*.

To determine the effects of various weather parameters on percent infestation, adult and larval population of *M. separata* were correlated with weather parameters *viz.* maximum temperature, minimum temperature, relative humidity at morning, relative humidity at

evening and total rainfall. The periodicities of observations at weekly intervals were planned as per the standard weeks during the entire crop season. The data generated was subjected to standard statistical procedure as per [4].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Adult incidence of Oriental armyworm *M. separata* in maize eco-system

The persual of data on adult populations of *M. separata* indicates the appearance from 18thSMW with minimum population of 1.50 adult per plant and reached its peak during 24thSMW with the maximum population of 13.50 adults per trap after reaching its peak, the overall incidence gradually declined and lasted up to 13thSMW with the adult population of 2.00 adults per trap presented in Table-1. The persual of data presented in Table 2 revealed that correlations drawn between important weather parameters with the adult of *M. separata* resulted positive correlation with maximum temperature ($r = 0.14$) and negative correlation with minimum temperature ($r = -0.22$). Morning R.H ($r = -0.52^*$) evening RH ($r = -0.47^*$) and showed significant negative association with the *M. separata* adults. Our results are inlinewith [15] who reported that the abundance of *Leucinodes orbonalis* in relation to some abiotic factors and registered first adult male moth was trapped during 24thSMW from different locations of District Kupwara. The peak population of adult moth was observed during 34thSMW. He also studied the correlation between abiotic factors and adult moth catch of *L. orbonalis* at all the locations had positive and significant correlation with minimum temperature, while as maximum temperature, rainfall, and relative humidity (evening) had positive and non-significant correlation, though relative humidity (morning) had negative and non-significant correlation during the present study. Furthermore [12] found moth catch to be significant and positively correlated with both maximum and minimum temperature and negatively correlated with relative humidity, whereas rainfall did not influence the trap catch significantly.

Larval incidence and correlation of Oriental armyworm *M. separata* with weather parameters in maize eco-system

The data presented in Table 1 on the larval population of *M. separata* was noticed from 18th SMW with 0.30 larvae/plant and the population reached its peak during 29thSMW with the maximum population 4.10 larvae/plant respectively. After the peak, the overall incidence gradually declined and lasted up to six weeks with the larval population of 0.30 larvae/plant at 37thSMW on maize. Our study is in line with [10], who reported maximum peak activity of fall armyworm in the month of March, Similarly[6] observed the infestation and distribution of fall armyworm increasing from January to March month. The persual of data presented in Table 2 revealed that correlations drawn between important weather parameters with the larval *M. separata* shows significant positive correlation with maximum temperature ($r = 0.60^{**}$) and minimum temperature ($r = 0.56^{**}$). Morning R.H ($r = -0.36$), evening RH ($r = -0.29$) showed negative association and rainfall ($r = -0.16$) also exhibited negative association with the larval infestation of *M. separata*. Our study is in line with [7] who observed the larval population of fall armyworm was positively correlation with maximum temperature ($r = 0.72$), and negatively correlation with both relative humidity (-0.5473) and rainfall (-0.5874) in Perambalur, district of Tamil nadu during Rabi, 2019. The

present findings were line with the [20] who reported that larval population density of fall armyworm was positively and significantly correlation with temperature our findings are also in agreement with [11] who observed temperature was significantly affect the density of fall armyworm

Percent infestation and correlation of Oriental armyworm *M. separata* with weather parameters in maize eco-system

The data indicated in Table 1 reveals the per cent infestation commenced from 19thSMW with 10 per cent and reached its peak on 29thSMW with 63 percent infestation and showed the declining trend from 30thSMW and lasted up to 8th SMW with 10 per cent infestation on 37thSMW. The incidence of *M. separata* in our studies was similar to the findings of [19] who reported that the infestation of maize stem borer (*Chilo partellus*) commenced from 24th standard week till 40thstandard week. The peak leaf infestation was observed in 32nd SMW 48.05 per cent from where it started declining and reached to minimum in 40thstandard week 13.05 per cent. Similarly[9] who reported that the per cent infestation of stem borers varied during different months and observed highest infestation 19.22 per cent in the month of August followed by July 15.80 per cent and September 15.10 per cent. The findings of present study are also in accordance with [13] who reported maximum population; per cent infestation of *S. litura* (Fabricius) on groundnut was observed during 13thSMW with 3.80 larva per meter row and 60.1 per cent infestation, respectively. The result of correlation study on per cent infestation revealed that per cent infestation of *M. separata* resulted significant positive correlation with maximum temperature ($r = 0.47^*$) and minimum temperature ($r = 0.53^*$). Morning R.H ($r = -0.22$) evening RH ($r = -0.29$) showed negative association and rainfall ($r = -0.20$) also exhibited negative association with the per cent infestation of *M. separata* presented in table 2. Our study is almost in close conformity with (14) who observed the maximum temperature was positively correlation on fall armyworm infestation and in addition, observed the relative humidity was negatively correlated with *S. frugiperda* infestation.

Table1: Seasonal incidence of Oriental Armyworm, *Mythimna separata* infesting maize in North Kashmir.

Standard Meteorological Week(SMW)	Kharif season 2021			Weather parameters				
	Adult/trap	Larvae/Plant	Percent Infestation	Maximum Temp. (°C)	Minimum Temp.(°C)	Morning RH	Evening RH	Rainfall
18 th	2.00	0.00	0.00	24.5	9.28	71.85	54.44	0.4
19 th	3.00	0.33	10.00	22.57	10.14	79.57	66.42	3.6

20 th	3.00	0.66	14.00	24.21	8.92	86.85	46.57	1.65
21 th	7.00	0.66	17.00	23.92	8.07	78.28	48.85	1.97
22 th	9.00	1.33	20.00	27.85	11.64	77.28	56.57	0.45
23 th	13.00	1.51	22.00	32.42	15.28	69.14	39.71	0
24 th	13.50	1.73	24.00	27.35	13.64	74.14	50.85	2.07
25 th	9.50	2.50	37.00	28.84	12.14	67	37.71	0.17
26 th	10.50	3.20	41.00	31.21	13.42	60.14	38.57	0.37
27 th	3.00	3.50	53.00	30.44	15.14	69.42	38.14	1.72
28 th	2.00	3.70	57.00	30.04	17.98	76.28	44.14	2.1
29 th	1.50	4.10	63.00	28.7	18.01	82.14	55	1.7
30 th	0.00	3.50	35.00	31.22	19.77	77.85	59.71	7.54
31 th	0.00	1.70	17.00	29.8	17.48	82.85	60	9.4
32 th	0.00	1.50	15.00	29.88	15.3	71.71	54.71	2.25
33 th	2.00	1.30	12.00	29.28	13.61	79.57	46.71	13.25
34 th	3.00	0.50	12.00	32.52	15.51	74.57	40.42	2.1
35 th	5.00	0.20	10.00	29.21	13.5	75.14	45.42	0.51
36 th	4.50	0.30	10.00	31.12	14.94	74.14	44.57	0
37 th	2.00	0.30	10.00	26.64	13.55	83.71	58.71	14.08

Table 2: Correlation between weather parameters and weekly observations on adult, larval population and percent infestation of Oriental Armyworm *Mythimna separata*.

Kharif season (2021)	Weather parameters				
	Max.Temp. (°C)	Max.Temp. (°C)	Morning RH	Evening RH	Rainfall
Adult/ plant	0.14	-0.22	-0.52*	-0.47*	-0.51*
Larvae/Plant	0.60**	0.56**	-0.36	-0.29	-0.16
Percent Infestation	0.47*	0.53*	-0.22	-0.29	-0.20

CONCLUSION

The research indicates that adult *M. separata* presence on maize commenced in the 18th standard meteorological week, peaked in the 24th week, and persisted until the 37th week. In contrast, *M. separata* caterpillars emerged in the 19th SMW, peaked in the 29th week, and remained active until the 37th week in the maize ecosystem during 2021. The minimum infestation 10 per cent occurred on the 19th SMW, with the peak infestation 63 per cent

observed on the 29th SMW during the Kharif season. Infestation decreased over eight weeks, reaching 10 per cent on the 37th SMW. Correlation analysis with weather parameters and weekly catches with the adult of *M. separata* shows positive correlation with maximum temperature ($r = 0.14$) and negative correlation with minimum temperature ($r = -0.22$) Morning R.H ($r = -0.52^*$) evening RH ($r = -0.47^*$) showed significant negative association and rainfall ($r = -0.51^*$) also showed significant negative association with the *M. separata* adults during Kharif 2021. The persual of data presented revealed that correlations drawn between important weather parameters with the larval *M. separata* a significant positive correlation between larval infestation of *M. separata* and maximum temperature ($r = 0.60^{**}$) as well as minimum temperature ($r = 0.56^{**}$). Morning relative humidity ($r = -0.36$) and evening relative humidity ($r = -0.29$) exhibited negative associations, while rainfall ($r = -0.16$) showed a negative association with larval infestation. Similarly, the percentage infestation of *M. separata* demonstrated a significant positive correlation with maximum temperature ($r = 0.47^*$) and minimum temperature ($r = 0.53^*$). Morning relative humidity ($r = -0.22$) and evening relative humidity ($r = -0.29$) showed negative associations, while rainfall ($r = -0.20$) exhibited a negative association with the percentage infestation of *M. separata* during Kharif 2021.

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