

## Microbial partnerships: Exploring gut bacteria in *Eudocima* moths, unravelling differential gut microbiome composition of *E. materna* and *E. phalonia* (Family: Erebidae)

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### Abstract

*Eudocima materna* and *Eudocima phalonia* is a commonly found moth species of the Erebidae family. At the same time, collection was done at nearby areas and fruit orchards of the Jalna district of Maharashtra. The study of gut microbiota was done on adults (EMA) and larvae (EML) of *Eudocima materna* and adults of *Eudocima phalonia* (EPA). The larva was reared at a laboratory that fed on *Tinospora Cordifolia* locally called gulvel, both the stages of *E. materna* and *E. Phalonia* were dissected in aseptic condition under laminar airflow, and gut samples were collected in liquid nitrogen. After 16s rRNA sequencing, we found that bacterial symbionts vary in both stages of the life cycle of *E. materna*. In adult *E. materna* 49% Wittichii of bacterial species of the genus Sphingomonas are found whereas in larva only 5% wittichii bacteria were observed. Larva of *E. materna* consists of 33% Komagatae bacterial species; on the other hand, the adult consists of 0% *M. komagatae* bacteria. Adult of *E. Phalonia* symbiotes 61% of *A. woluwensis* species of genus Arthobacter, 0% of Wittichii, and *E. materna* has 0% of woluwensis This is how we have compared gut microbiome based on 16s rRNA sequencing of gut bacteria.

**Keywords:** Erebidae family, *Eudocima materna*, *Eudocima phalonia*, adult stage, larva stage, gut microbiota, 16s rRNA sequencing

### Introduction

Insects have co-evolved with diverse microorganisms in their gut, constituting communities that may affect the host's fitness or be helpful for the host's survival. Therefore, the identification of microbes and host physiological functions—such as development, physiology, ecological interactions, evolutionary diversity, and biochemical functions—is closely associated with their gut microbiota (Zhu, Z., Liu, Y., Hu, H., and Wang, 2022) [20]. The symbiotic relationship between insects and their gut bacteria is crucial; evidence shows a close association between particular groups of insects and the community of gut microbiota inhabiting their gut (Dillon & Dillon, 2004; Tang *et al.*, 2012; Morrison *et al.*, 2009; Mereghetti *et al.*, 2017) [3, 11, 13, 15]. This study focuses on the adult stage of *Eudocima materna* (EMA), the larval stage of *Eudocima materna* (EML), and the adult stage of *Eudocima phalonia* (EPA). Research on gut-associated microbiota has highlighted the significant impact of microbes on host physiology. Symbiotic bacteria, in particular, play crucial roles in host development. Understanding the intricate interactions between bacterial communities and their hosts is essential for studying host-microbe relationships (Hammer *et al.*, 2017; Jia *et al.*, 2021; Zhao *et al.*, 2023) [6, 7, 19].

In many insects, gut bacteria fulfill functional roles by providing essential nutrients that the hosts lack through mutualistic relations. Indigenous bacteria in moths also modulate gene expression related to vital intestinal functions, including mucosal barrier fortification, nutrient

absorption, and xenobiotic metabolism (Dillon & Dillon, 2004; Gong *et al.*, 2020) [3, 5]. Most insects harbor gut microbiota that specifically participates in host physiology, supporting their polyphagous nature and providing essential nutrition. For instance, the gut microbiota of pest moths, such as *Spodoptera littoralis*, was investigated using classical 16S rRNA gene sequencing and microarray analysis (Tang *et al.*, 2012; Mereghetti *et al.*, 2017) [11, 15]. Notably, the genera *Clostridium* and *Enterococcus* (specifically *Enterococcus casseliflavus* and *Enterococcus mundtii*) were found to be the most abundant bacteria in the gut of *S. littoralis* (Tang *et al.*, 2012) [15].

“This study contributes to our understanding of gut microbiomes across different species of moths in the Erebidae family, shedding light on the intricate relationships between these insects and their gut microbiota composition. The characterization was done using 16S rRNA gene sequencing and metagenomic technology. The moths were collected from nearby farms in the Jalna district of Maharashtra. *E. materna* is a highly damaging pest of fruit orchards (Ravindra Fakirrao Pathre and Sharad Devidasrao Jadhav, 2020) [14]. Additionally, there may be relative contributions from the host plant and other factors related to variation in microbial composition in these two moths. Some studies suggest that host plant fruits release chemical signals to attract moths, which have adapted chemoreceptors for these particular signals (Kayande *et al.*, 2023) [8].

### Materials and methods

#### 1. Sample collection and DNA extraction

We have collected adult *E. materna* from fruit orchards of nearby places in the Jalna district of Maharashtra. Collected adults were carried to the laboratory, and identified morphologically using different keys available. Then after collecting their eggs kept them in a rearing cage until they hatched out of the egg, and fed them on freshly collected leaves of Menispermaceae until we got to the larval stage. Adults and larvae were dissected in aseptic conditions under laminar airflow to prevent external contaminations. Later words guts were collected in liquid nitrogen and kept freezing for further analysis. The samples were then sent to a known laboratory for metagenomics for DNA extraction and 16s rRNA gene amplification and sequencing.

## 2. 16s rRNA amplification and sequencing the raw sequencing

Data underwent preprocessing and quality control using the DADA2 pipeline in R. Initially, the necessary libraries were loaded, and the working directory was set to access the sequencing files. Forward and reverse reads were then extracted, and sample names were parsed. Subsequently, quality control and error correction were performed to filter out low-quality reads and correct sequencing errors. Dereplication and denoising were conducted to remove redundant sequences and infer amplicon sequence variants (ASVs) using DADA2's algorithm. Following dereplication and denoising, the denoised forward and reverse reads were merged to generate high-quality, overlapping sequences to enhance downstream analyses' accuracy. A sequence table was constructed to represent the abundance of each ASV across samples. Chimeric sequences were identified and removed to ensure dataset integrity. Taxonomy was assigned to the ASVs using a reference database, resolving duplicate taxa names and cleaning the taxonomic table. Finally, a phyloseq object was created to integrate the OTU table, sample metadata, and taxonomic information. Downstream analyses characterized microbial community composition and diversity, visualizing taxonomic composition through bar plots and generating sample-wise taxonomic tables. Alpha diversity was assessed using metrics like Shannon, Simpson, and Chao1 indices, while beta diversity was evaluated through Bray-Curtis or UniFrac distances, visualized using NMDS or PCoA plots. Differential abundance analysis identified taxa significantly differing in abundance between sample groups. Krona visualization explored microbial community taxonomic composition, providing comprehensive insights into microbial community structure and diversity.

## 3. Microbiome analysis report

Microbiome analysis is crucial for understanding the composition and function of microbial communities in

various environments. In this report, we present an analysis pipeline for processing and analyzing microbiome data using the DADA2 and phyloseq packages in R.

### 3.1 Sample Information

Table 1

Sample ID (As on tube)	Sample Type (Choose from the dropdown)	Species	Genus
EMA	RRSID - 2099	Eudocima Materna	Eudocima
EML	RRSID - 2100	Eudocima Materna	Eudocima
EPA	RRSID - 2101	Eudocima phalonia	Eudocima

### 3.2 Data Acquisition and Preprocessing

We began by setting up the working directory and loading the required R libraries, including dada2, tidyverse, psadd, vegan and phyloseq. Fastq files containing raw sequencing data were retrieved and processed to extract sample names. Quality control and error correction were performed on the raw sequences to ensure data integrity and accuracy

### 3.3 Dereplication and Sample Inference

Dereplication was carried out to collapse identical sequences into unique sequences, followed by sample inference using the DADA2 algorithm. This step allowed us to identify and correct errors in sequencing data, resulting in high-resolution sequence variants (ASVs).

#### 3.3.1 Merging Paired Reads

Paired-end reads were merged to generate consensus sequences, reducing spurious sequence variants and improving data quality.

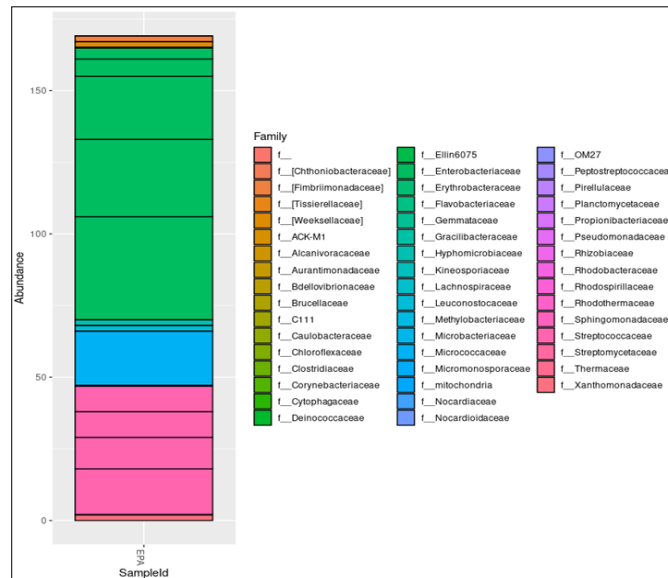
#### 3.3.2 Constructing Sequence Table

A sequence table was constructed to represent the abundance of each ASV across samples, providing a higher-resolution view of microbial community composition compared to traditional OTU tables.

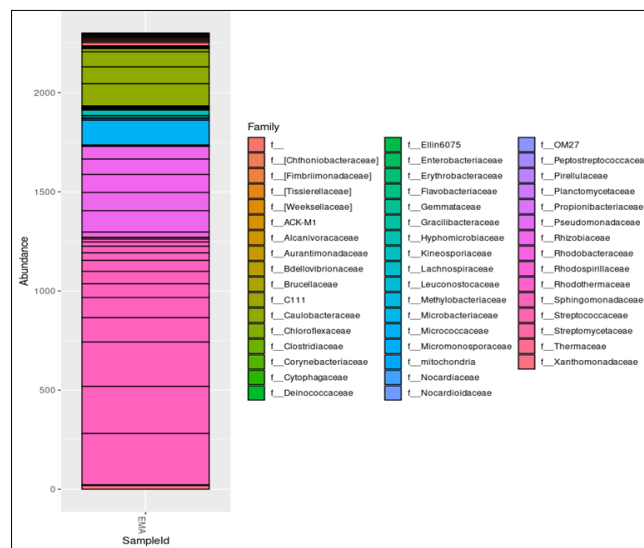
#### 3.3.3 Taxonomy Assignment and Data Filtering

Taxonomic classification was first performed using the Greengenes reference database to assign taxonomic labels to amplicon sequence variants (ASVs). Additionally, species-level assignment was carried out to further characterize microbial communities.

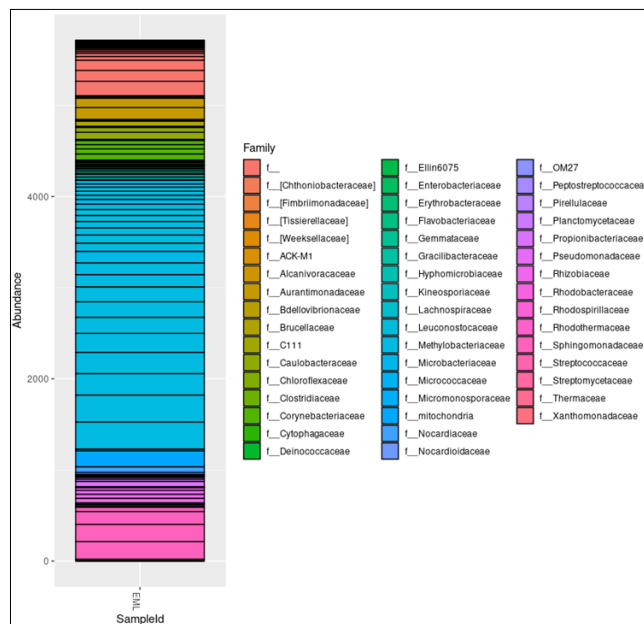
After the taxonomy assignment, data filtering was applied to ensure data quality and completeness. We filtered the data based on the presence of NA values and species information, retaining only the ASVs that had species-level taxonomic information available.



A



B



C

**Fig 1:** Relative abundance of most predominant families of gut bacteria in (A) *E. pkhalonia* adult, (B) *E. matena* adult, and (C) *E. matena* larva species of Erebidae family

### 3.4 Data Visualization and Diversity Analysis

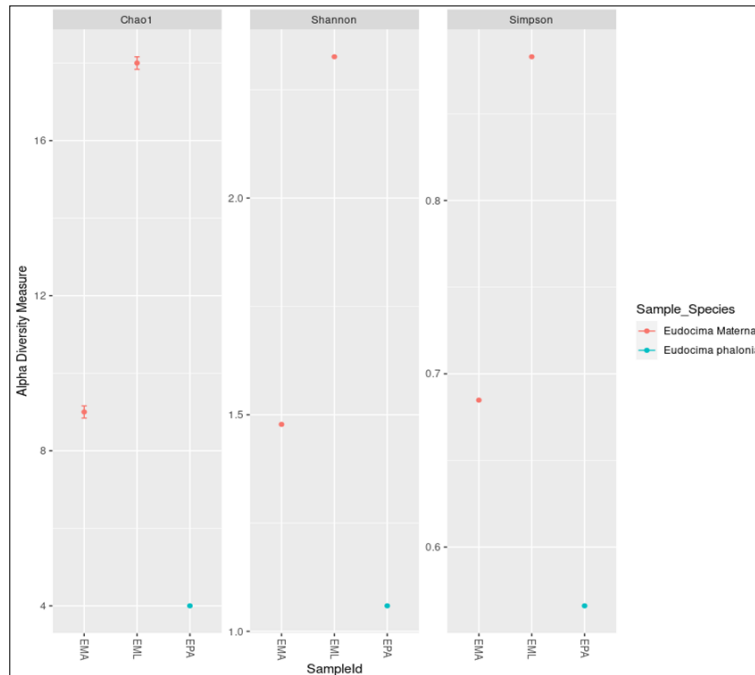
#### 3.5.1 Alpha Diversity

Alpha diversity measures the diversity within individual samples. We calculated various alpha diversity metrics, including

- Shannon diversity index

- Simpson diversity index
- Chao1 estimator

These metrics provide insights into the richness and evenness of microbial communities within each sample.

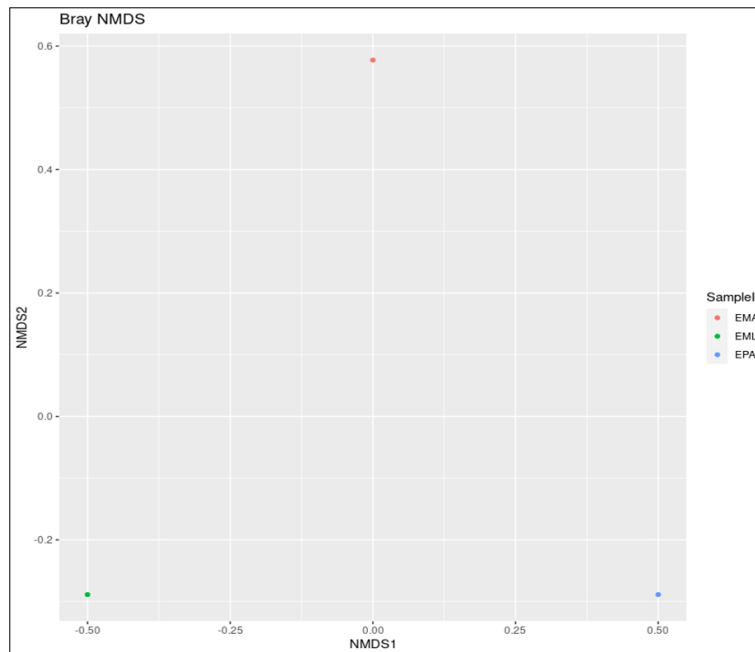


**Fig 2:** Alpha diversity of Chao1, Shannon, and Simpson indices of gut bacterial communities in EMA (*E.materna* adult), EML (*E.materna* larva), and EPA (*E.phalonia* adult).

#### 3.5.2 Beta Diversity

Beta diversity measures the dissimilarity between microbial communities across samples. We utilized ordination techniques such as NMDS (Non-metric Multidimensional Scaling) and PCoA (Principal Coordinates Analysis) to

visualize the beta diversity based on various distance metrics, such as Bray-Curtis dissimilarity and Jaccard distance. These ordination plots allow for the exploration of microbial community composition and structure between samples.



**Fig 3:** Nonmetric multidimensional scaling (NMDS) analysis of gut bacterial communities in EMA, EML, and EPA. The coloured points in the figure represent a sample and the degree of difference is represented by the distance between points. These ordination plots allow for the exploration of microbial community composition and structure between samples.

**Result**

**4. Identified Gut Bacteria Species**

**Table 1: *Eudocima materna* adult**

ASV	Kingdom	Phylum	Class	Order	Family	Genus	Species
ASV1	k_Bacteria	p_Proteobacteria	c_Alphaproteobacteria	o_Rhizobiales	f_Methylobacteriaceae	g_Methylobacterium	s_komagatae
ASV4	k_Bacteria	p_Proteobacteria	c_Alphaproteobacteria	o_Rhizobiales	f_Methylobacteriaceae	g_Methylobacterium	s_organophilum
ASV7	k_Bacteria	p_Actinobacteria	c_Actinobacteria	o_Actinomycetales	f_Corynebacteriaceae	g_Corynebacterium	s_stationis
ASV10	k_Bacteria	p_Actinobacteria	c_Actinobacteria	o_Actinomycetales	f_Propionibacteriaceae	g_Propionibacterium	s_acnes
ASV13	k_Bacteria	p_Proteobacteria	c_Gammaproteobacteria	o_Xanthomonadales	f_Xanthomonadaceae	g_Stenotrophomonas	s_geniculata
ASV16	k_Bacteria	p_Bacteroidetes	c_Flavobacteriia	o_Flavobacteriales	f_Flavobacteriaceae	g_Flavobacterium	s_frigidarium
ASV19	k_Bacteria	p_Proteobacteria	c_Gammaproteobacteria	o_Enterobacteriales	f_Enterobacteriaceae	g_Enterobacter	s_cloacae
ASV25	k_Bacteria	p_Proteobacteria	c_Gammaproteobacteria	o_Pseudomonadales	f_Pseudomonadaceae	g_Pseudomonas	s_pseudoalcaligenes
ASV28	k_Bacteria	p_Proteobacteria	c_Gammaproteobacteria	o_Pseudomonadales	f_Pseudomonadaceae	g_Pseudomonas	s_fragi
ASV31	k_Bacteria	p_Proteobacteria	c_Gammaproteobacteria	o_Enterobacteriales	f_Enterobacteriaceae	g_Pantoea	s_agglomerans

**Table 2: *Eudocima materna* larva**

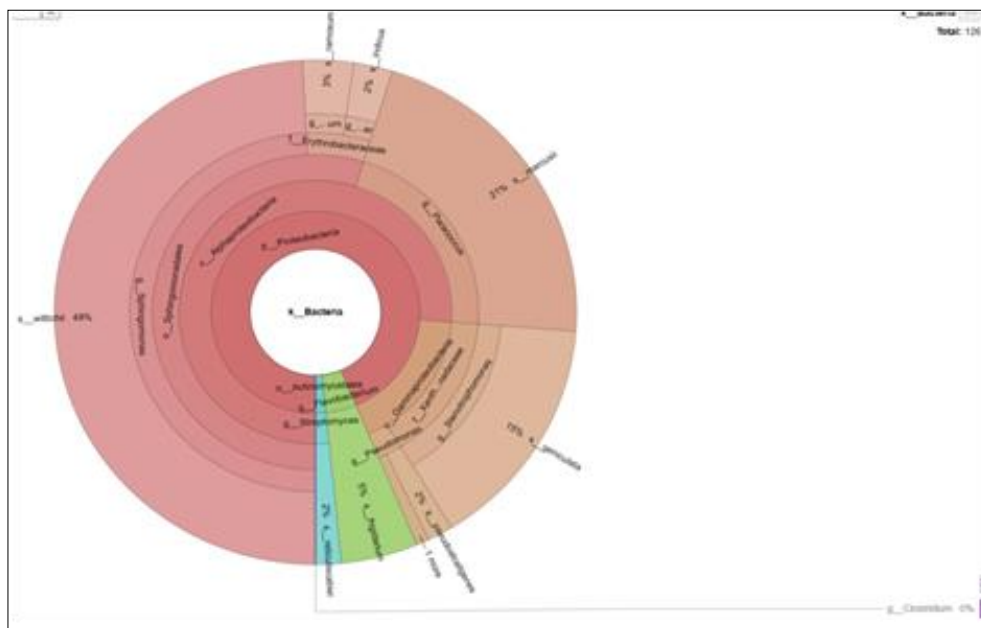
ASVs	Kingdom	Phylum	Class	Order	Family	Genus	Species
ASV2	k_Bacteria	p_Proteobacteria	c_Alphaproteobacteria	o_Rickettsiales	f_mitochondria	g_Zea	s_luxurians
ASV5	k_Bacteria	p_Proteobacteria	c_Alphaproteobacteria	o_Rhizobiales	f_Methylobacteriaceae	g_Methylobacterium	s_adhaesivum
ASV8	k_Bacteria	p_Proteobacteria	c_Alphaproteobacteria	o_Rhizobiales	f_Methylobacteriaceae	g_Methylobacterium	s_komagatae
ASV11	k_Bacteria	p_Proteobacteria	c_Alphaproteobacteria	o_Sphingomonadales	f_Sphingomonadaceae	g_Sphingomonas	s_wittichii
ASV14	k_Bacteria	p_Actinobacteria	c_Actinobacteria	o_Actinomycetales	f_Micrococcaceae	g_Arthrobacter	s_woluwensis
ASV17	k_Bacteria	p_Proteobacteria	c_Gammaproteobacteria	o_Enterobacteriales	f_Enterobacteriaceae	g_Enterobacter	s_cloacae
ASV20	k_Bacteria	p_Proteobacteria	c_Alphaproteobacteria	o_Sphingomonadales	f_Erythrobacteraceae	g_Erythromicrobium	s_ramosum
ASV23	k_Bacteria	p_Proteobacteria	c_Alphaproteobacteria	o_Sphingomonadales	f_Erythrobacteraceae	g_Altererythrobacter	s_indicus
ASV26	k_Bacteria	p_Actinobacteria	c_Actinobacteria	o_Actinomycetales	f_Streptomycetaceae	g_Streptomyces	s_reticuliscabiei
ASV29	k_Bacteria	p_Proteobacteria	c_Gammaproteobacteria	o_Xanthomonadales	f_Xanthomonadaceae	g_Arenimonas	s_oryziterrae

**Table 3: *Eudocima phalonia* adult**

ASVs	Kingdom	Phylum	Class	Order	Family	Genus	Species
ASV3	k_Bacteria	p_Proteobacteria	c_Alphaproteobacteria	o_Rhizobiales	f_Methylobacteriaceae	g_Methylobacterium	s_hispanicum
ASV6	k_Bacteria	p_Proteobacteria	c_Alphaproteobacteria	o_Rhizobiales	f_Methylobacteriaceae	g_Methylobacterium	s_komagatae
ASV9	k_Bacteria	p_Proteobacteria	c_Alphaproteobacteria	o_Sphingomonadales	f_Sphingomonadaceae	g_Sphingomonas	s_wittichii
ASV12	k_Bacteria	p_Proteobacteria	c_Alphaproteobacteria	o_Rhodobacterales	f_Rhodobacteraceae	g_Paracoccus	s_marcusii
ASV15	k_Bacteria	p_Bacteroidetes	c_Flavobacteriia	o_Flavobacteriales	f_Flavobacteriaceae	g_Flavobacterium	s_succinicans
ASV18	k_Bacteria	p_Bacteroidetes	c_Flavobacteriia	o_Flavobacteriales	f_Flavobacteriaceae	g_Flavobacterium	s_frigidarium
ASV21	k_Bacteria	p_Firmicutes	c_Clostridia	o_Clostridiales	f_Clostridiaceae	g_Clostridium	s_celatum
ASV24	k_Bacteria	p_Proteobacteria	c_Gammaproteobacteria	o_Enterobacteriales	f_Enterobacteriaceae	g_Erwinia	s_dispersa
ASV27	k_Bacteria	p_Proteobacteria	c_Gammaproteobacteria	o_Pseudomonadales	f_Pseudomonadaceae	g_Pseudomonas	s_umsongensis
ASV30	k_Bacteria	p_Proteobacteria	c_Gammaproteobacteria	o_Pseudomonadales	f_Pseudomonadaceae	g_Pseudomonas	s_mendocina

**4.1 Adult *E. materna*:**

- 49% *wittichii* genus *Spingomonas*.
- 0% of *S. komagatae* genus Methyl bacterium
- 21% *s\_marcusii* genus *paracoccus*
- 5% *s\_frigidarium* genus *Flavobacterium*
- 2% of bacteria of genus *Pseudomonas* (*s\_pseudoalcaligenes* and *s\_mendocina*)

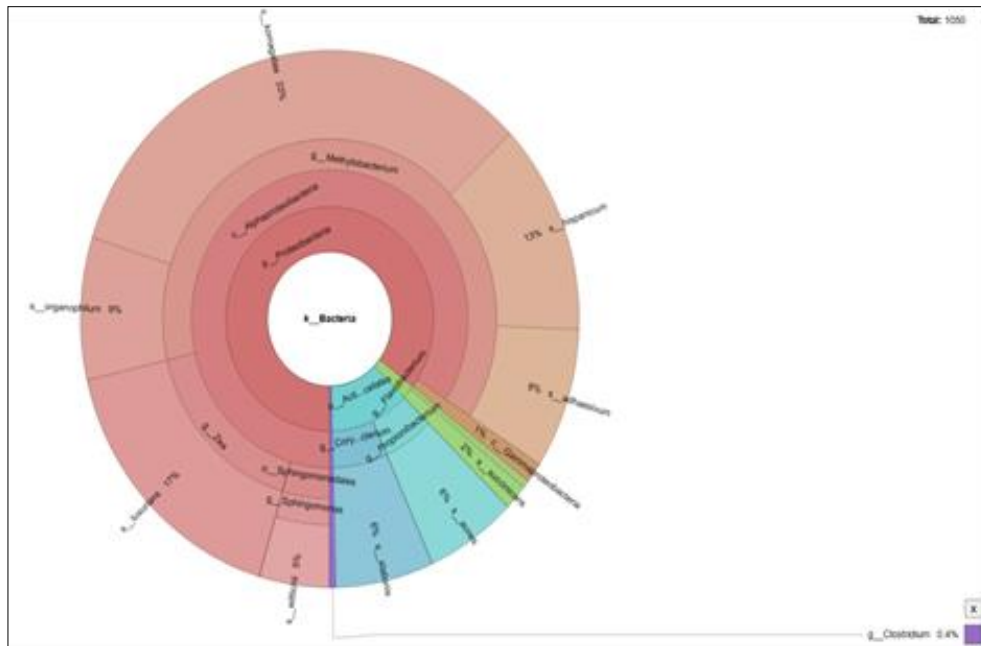


**Fig 4 A: *Eudocima materna* adult (EMA)**

**4.2 Larva of *E. materna*:**

- 33% o *komagatae* genus Methyl bacterium
- 5% of *wittichi* bacteria genus *Spingomonas*
- 0% *s\_\_marcusii* genus *paracoccus*

- 0.5% *s\_\_cloacae* genus *Enterobacter*
- 0.5% *s\_\_frigidarium* genus *Flavobacterium*
- 0.4% of bacteria of genus *Pseudomonas* (*s\_\_umsongensis* and *s\_\_fragi*).

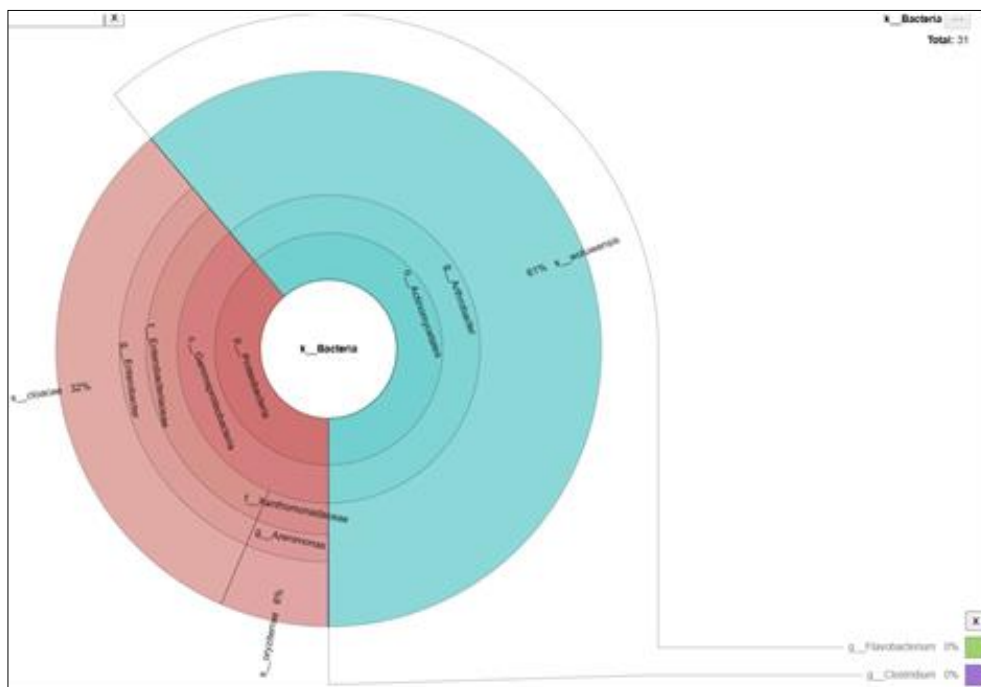


**Fig 4 B:** *Eudocima materna* larva (EML) showing significant difference in bacterial taxa at the level of Phylum, Class, Order, Family, Genus and species from inside to outside, diameter and percentage of sections of circles shows relative abundance. Different colours and shades were used to show taxonomic variations in bacteria

**4.3 Adults of *E. Phalonia***

- *E. Phalonia* symbionts
- 61% are *woluwensis*.genus *Arthobacter*.

- 0% of *wittichii*. genus *Spingomonas*
- 0% *s\_\_marcusii* genus *paracoccus*
- 32% *s\_\_cloacae* genus *enterobacter*



**Fig 4 C:** *Eudocima phalonia* Adult (EPA)

\*Figure 4 A,B, and C Showing significant difference in bacterial taxa at the level of Phylum, Class, Order, Family, Genus and species from inside to outside, diameter and

percentage of sections of circles shows relative abundance. Different colors and shades were used to show taxonomic variations in bacteria.

## Discussion

Gut microbiota has a different symbiotic association with a host, it might be mutualistic, commensal, parasitic, etc. which may involve different ways in physiology, behaviour, ecology, and evolution of the host. (Wang *et al.*, 2020) <sup>[16]</sup> (Tang *et al.*, 2012) <sup>[15]</sup> Metagenomic analysis to investigate bacterial community provided detailed information on diversity, composition, richness, structure, and function (Zea *et al.*, 2019) <sup>[17]</sup>. In some insects mating attractiveness of the host can also be affected by the gut microbiota, when in *D. melanogaster*, the composition of *L.plantarum* isolated from the gut of fly mating preferences could be reversed from axenic flies: thus concluding flies mate preferentially with individuals harboring similar microbiota, which can affect the host lineage and leading ultimately to speciation (Engel and Moran 2013) <sup>[4]</sup>. This study reveals the knowledge of bacterial communities in the gut of lepidopteran moths of the Erebidae family, in which two found species have been taken *Eudocima materna* (Two life stages and larvae) and *Eudocima phalonia* (Adult). Some previous studies on gut microbiota reveal that Lepidoptera has indicated diet influences larval midgut community composition as a key factor (Broderick *et al.*, 2004) <sup>[1]</sup> to evaluate midgut bacterial composition on larvae of Gypsy moth (Family-Erebidae) has been observed to investigate interactions between sources of egg mass and environmental sources such as laboratory-based and wild diet of bacteria on larval midgut community despite that observation says, Midgut Communities Within Gypsy Moth Larvae Become Highly Similar Through Larval Development (Mason & Raffa, 2014) <sup>[10]</sup>. IN cotton bollworm- *Helicoverpa armigera* four phyla of bacteria (Proteobacteria, Firmicutes, Actinobacteria, and Bacteroidetes) and two genera of bacteria (Enterobacter and Enterococcus) dominated across all life stages of cotton bollworm (Zhao *et al.*, 2023) <sup>[19]</sup>, which was similar to several other lepidopteran pests, which simply supports the observations of this study which shows Proteobacteria and Actinobacteria are dominant phyla in both the species EMA, EML and EPA. *Hyphantria cunea Drury* (Family-Erebidae) larvae has *E. mundtii* and *K. oxytoca* were isolated as the dominant midgut bacterial strains which were similar to *H. cunea* larvae separately fed on an artificial diet and other host leaves, *Enterococcus* is most abundant genus found in *H. cunea* larvae (Chen *et al.*, 2023) <sup>[2]</sup>. If we compare other fruit moths with EMA and EPA, *Carposina sasakii* the peach fruit moth (PFM) and *Grapholita molesta* the oriental fruit moth (OFM) were dominated by the genus *Pseudomonas*, *Gluconobacter*, *Acetobacter*, and *Pantoea* of gut microbiota. *Pantoea* is a highly diverse genus that we have found in EMA species that can cause plant diseases and human diseases but also have functions in habitat restoration and pesticide degradation among the abundant bacteria taxa (Gong & Fruit-feeding Moth, 2020) <sup>[5]</sup>, *Pseudomonas brenneri* plays a prominent role in the removal of heavy metals. This species is significantly more abundant in OFM than PFM we found pseudomonas genera in both EMA and EPA with another species (Gong *et al.* 2020) <sup>[5]</sup>. The functional role of some of the bacterial genera we have found in EMA, EML, and EPA might be as Observed by (Zhang & Zhang, 2022) <sup>[18]</sup>, the genus's proteobacteria *Methylobacterium* shows the function of Nitrogen fixation, *Sphingomonas* function as Microbe-mediated detoxification of phytotoxins and pesticides, *Propionibacterium* Produce antimicrobial

peptides, *Pseudomonas* play role as Anti-phytopathogenic fungi, *Pantoea* Affect oviposition behavior, morphogenesis and development, *Enterobacter* function as Anti-phytopathogenic fungi activity; growth and development, *Stenotrophomonas* isolated from intestine *Diatraea saccharalis* larvae were found to possess cellulolytic activity, *Erwinia* sp. isolated from Lepidoptera insect shows pectinolytic activity (Zhang & Zhang, 2022) <sup>[18]</sup>. Members of this genus are recognized for their sphingoglycolipid production and their role in the degradation of complex aromatic compounds, strain RW1 of this species is particularly notable for its capacity to metabolize dibenzo-p-dioxin and phenazine-1-carboxylic acid which is found in soil (Moreno-Forero & Van Der Meer, 2015) <sup>[12]</sup>, perhaps it also has been observed in gut of pest insect cotton aphid *Aphis gossypii* which evolved to be a insecticide-resistant by metabolizing imidacloprid due to appearance of *Sphingomonas* gut symbiont (Lv *et al.*, 2023) <sup>[9]</sup>.

As per metagenomics data analysis, we found that both the species *E. materna* and *E. phalonia* have different compositions of gut symbionts, there are only a couple of bacterial endosymbionts that were common in both species. On the other hand, larvae and adults of the species *Eudocima materna* have tremendous variations in gut microbiota.

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## Digital Reference for Data Visualization (fig. 5A, 5B and 5C)

<E:\16s rRNA\Species Visualization.html>

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