

Survey spots 186 species of butterfly in Munnar

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Thiruvananthapuram: A four-day survey in the Munnar wildlife division, organized jointly by the Wildlife department, and experts from various NGO's and Institutes in southern India reported the sightings of 220 species of birds and 186 species of butterflies.

Sighting of Southern Birdwing, the largest butterfly in our country as well as the Grass Jewel the smallest butterfly in India were also recorded during the survey. Bird species such as Shaheen falcon, Legge's Hawk eagle, Chiffchaff, and endemic birds such as Nilgiri Pipit, Black and orange Flycatcher, Nilgiri Flycatcher and Broad tailed Grassbird were also sighted.

Endemic birds reported from the region include Red-



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disc bushbrown, Palni bushbrown, Palni four ring, Palni Fritillary, Nilgiri clouded yellow, Nilgiri Tiger and Palni Sailor.

It may be noted that Kerala has about 515 species of birds and 320 species of Butterflies.

The team also found direct and indirect evidence of presence of tigers, leopards,

elephants, and other mammals. Eighteen species of frogs, 15 species of Odonates and ants were also recorded in this off-season survey. Among the ants, one new genera and five new species are expected after rigorous study.

Around 120 volunteers and a 60 forest staff participated in the survey. Volunte-

ers from Travancore Nature History Society (TNHS) Trivandrum, KFRI Peechi, ZSI Calicut, Ecologists and staff from Kerala Forest Department, Birders Sans Borders Thrissur, Green Roots Alapuzha, Ferns Wayanad, Kerala Agricultural University at Vellyani, MNHS Calicut, SEEK Kannur, BBC Bangalore, TNBS Tamil Nadu, Rajapalayam, Butterfly Club, Wynter-Blyth Association, Centre For Wildlife Studies Wayanad, KVASU Wayanad, and Pondicherry University took part in the survey.

Inaugurating the event at Munnar Forest office on Feb 22, Wildlife Warden Lakshmi Arun said, "The management plans of most of the protected areas in Munnar lack an updated faunal checklist". She stressed the need for systematic

assessment of biodiversity where the data is directly handed over to the park managers for improved practices.

Shola NP range officer Siby stressed on the importance of citizen science initiatives and expressed the need for training the field staff at the grassroot level.

The Munnar survey was conducted based on Pre-printed Checklists and Transect Methodology, instead of the electronic or mobile platforms, there by suggesting this as an alternative tool for systematic faunal surveys of birds, butterflies and other faunal at-lases.

The programme concluded at Munnar on 25th Feb was presided by the warden and range officers from the forest department.