



Flowers in Flight

*“See, mummy, slowly the flowers
Are flying away from these bowers!”*

*“No, son, I’ll tell you, they’re nice
And beautiful butterflies.”*

- Mahakavi Kumaran Asan¹

Butterflies are the winged beauties of the insect world and they interact with equally beautiful and colourful flowers to create an environment of prettiness that leads to the proliferation of the vegetative forms of life. The observation of butterflies is not just an adventure in knowledge, but a recreational boost to the tension-riddled mind of the modern man.

The slopes of the Western Ghats abound in hundreds of endemic forms of butterfly life. Where the traditional host plants are left without harmful developmental work, as in The Tall Trees Resorts property near Munnar, the most popular eco tourist destination in the Western Ghats region of Kerala, the butterflies continue to thrive without having to adapt to the unfamiliar garden plants. The most commonly sighted varieties in this resort are Southern Bird Wing (the butterfly with the largest wingspan in the sub continent), Blue Mormorn (also a large colourful variety), Plain Tiger, Blue Tiger (in large clubs), Tawny Coster, Common Crow, Crimson Rose, Common Rose, Lime Butterfly, Yellow Top, Orange Top, Black Admiral, Blue Admiral, Grass Jewel, etc.

¹ Mahakavi (great poet) Kumaran Asan (1873-1924) is one of the leading trio of Malayalam literature who enriched the language with his great works in verse and prose.



Butterflies and Moths

A less colourful relative insect life called moths is sometimes erroneously identified as butterflies. The differences are as follows:

- butterflies are active in the daytime and moths are nocturnal;
- most moths rest with their wings out flat, where butterflies hold their wings upright; and
- butterflies have clubs on the end of their antennae, while moths do not.

The lifecycle

The lifecycle of a butterfly is a fascinating process that begins as immobile eggs and goes through the stage of greedy larvae that gobble up the leaves of the host plant and again go into a phase of dormant immobility in the form of a pupa (chrysalis). It then emerges colourfully resplendent as the butterfly, flying from flower to flower and imbibing nectar. Its visit from flower to flower helps in pollination and vegetative propagation. After mating and laying eggs they die completing the cycle of life.

More about butterflies

- tiny scales arranged in distinctive colour patterns are the secret of beauty of the butterflies
- the taste sensors of butterflies are located on their feet, but the feeding is done through a straw-like proboscis that coils up when not in use
- some butterflies like the Monarch regularly migrate over long distances
- the life span of a butterfly may vary from a few weeks to several months
- the lives of the butterflies are interlinked with the lives of their host plants

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