

THE BUTTERFLY FAUNA IN THE CAMPUS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PERADENIYA

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The study mainly focused on the species identification, habitats and behaviour of the butterfly fauna. The study was carried out from April to October 2000, within the campus of the University of Peradeniya. Butterflies were studied, by walking along two routes within the Campus. The routes covered lower Hantana hills and relevant butterfly habitats such as woodlands, pine forests, home gardens and different types of grasslands. During the study period, 40 butterfly species belonging to 28 genera and 6 families were identified, indicating a high diversity of butterfly fauna in the area.

The distribution and behaviour of the butterflies in this area have a direct relationship with the climate and weather, and seem to be controlled mainly by the light intensity and humidity of the atmosphere. Butterflies become active a few hours after the sunrise, around 0900h and become more or less inactive after the sun set. Their numbers changes when the light intensity and humidity changes. Butterflies have preferred active periods to absorb more sunlight. Nigger Browns are high in number in the morning hours, from 0800 to 1000h, while Common Migrants are abundant in the mid day hours, from 1200 to 1400h. Butterflies also show different behavioural patterns such as gliding, feeding, defence, during their active periods. There appears to be a relationship between the size of the butterfly species and the height at which they fly. Small varieties were observed closer to ground level while larger varieties fly several metres above ground. Butterflies were observed to feed on a variety of plants; some were specific to certain plant species while others fed on several plant species. Among them, the more common plant species such as *Lantana* and *Panicum* are used by butterflies for feeding as well as basking or resting. Grasslands and home gardens were found to be suitable habitats of butterflies. These are well distributed in the campus of the University of Peradeniya and therefore the diversity of the butterfly fauna is high in the area.

