



Parthenos

Newsletter of DiversityIndia



Monkey Puzzle

Wildlife on Islands

Treating Black Kite

Abnormal Silverline

ODKF

Kabini and Vythiri

January 2011

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Cover photo: Monkey Puzzle *Rathinda amor* at Chiplun, Raigad, Maharashtra by Rohan Lovalekar

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Monkey Puzzle *Rathinda amor*

Balakrishnan Valappil

I found this caterpillar on *Samadera indica* in first week of May 2009 from Nilambur forests. *Ixora* is well known host plant. for this butterfly. *Samadera indica* appears to be a new record. Eggs can be found on flower buds and stems. The caterpillars feed on tender leaves.



The caterpillars are either red or green.

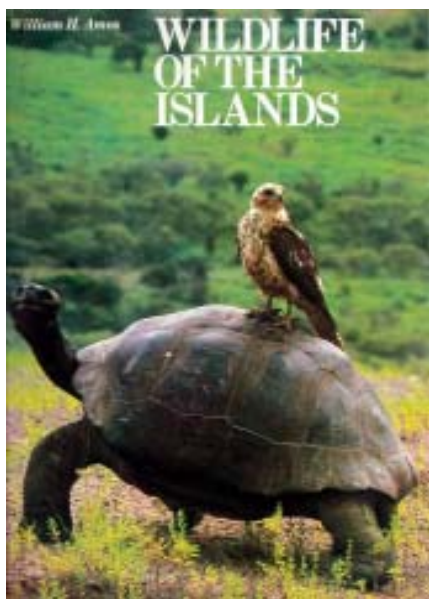


As far as I know the chrysalis is always green.

According to Wynter-Blyth the English name is derived from the fleshy protruberances on the caterpillar.

Book Review

Dr. Amol P Patwardhan



Wildlife Of The Islands

By *William H. Amos*

Published by Book Club Associates,
London (1980)

Hard bound Copy

pp231

Price not mentioned

Book is available online for approx. Rs.400.00

William H. Amos, a biologist who has authored this book has spent a third of his life on different islands studying all life forms on them. Therefore the book has become possibly the best book on island's natural history. He states that 'islands of the world exist in numbers beyond reckoning, ranging from isolated barren rocks to huge island continents.' For example, on a small scale map Philippines may be represented by only two dozens islands but factually it comprises staggering 7,000 islands.

As defined by Wikipedia, an island is any piece of sub-continental land that is surrounded by water. There are numerous islands in different oceans all over the world. They are mainly created in two ways. First, by the continuous eruption of deep-sea volcanoes and second, by the submergence of the land in the water converting mountain tops into an islands. Due to isolation from mainland, the wildlife on islands evolve separately. Hence many species appear endemic to these islands.

The major aim of this book is to focus the reader's attention on the landscapes including the flora and

fauna of the islands, which I feel, is beautifully visualised thanks to excellent layout, knowledgeable text and informative photographs.

As the author has properly said that it is difficult to catalogue all the islands, however, there is map of the earth which shows islands in ten different groups. The grouping is carried out according to the similarity between the wildlife. The ten groups are: Polar region, Northern Seas, Atlantics, Pacific, Indian Ocean, Australia, New Zealand, Polynesia, Micronesia and The Antarctic.

The first chapter describes the birth of the island explaining volcanic ashes causing decomposition of the soil which is rich in lime, phosphates and potash. The fertile soil supports the plant life first. The author cites an example of Krakatau Island in Indonesia where in 1883; life on the Island came to an end by the largest volcanic eruption ever known to mankind. The thundering sound of the eruptions was heard in all corners of Pacific. But in 1885, 25 species of plants appeared and by 1935 total 270 plant species recorded out of which 40% were carried by winds and less than 5% were introduced by humans. When a new island is created, different life forms steadily & gradually approach through various agents like sea, wind, humans etc. Birds are important agents of dispersal of new organisms. Many invertebrates, fish eggs attach to bird legs, also many plant parts especially seeds attach to bird body. *Bidens* is plant whose barbed fruit easily attaches to plumage of sea birds. This relative of sunflower is now widespread in the Pacific islands. Rafting is common means by which many life forms reach islands. Many insects, snails and reptiles have reached islands where they now thrive.





Kwajalein Atoll, Marshall Islands, Polynesia



Plants growing in cooled lava



Frilled Lizard, Australia

The subsequent chapters deal with the adaptations of the major plants and animals in the respective groups.

Thirty-three pages are dedicated to illustrations on filter effect, adaptive radiations, beaks of inches, adaptations in birds and so on. These black and white illustrious depictions make all concepts about islands very clear. The glossary follows, which increases readers vocabulary on the islands and ecology in general.

The Filter effect is very unique phenomenon in Lesser Sunda Islands. These islands are spread east-west between Sumatra and Australian complex. The diversity of Asian reptile species goes on reducing from west to east. Similarly diversity of Australian reptile species decreases from east to west. The reptile species distribution of both continents equals at an island of Damar in Banda Sea. This filter effect is very nicely shown by black and white illustration.

The front picture, the Galapagos Hawk sitting on Galapagos Giant Tortoise is very iconic for the island adaptations and endemism. It also represents the fragile ecosystems of islands which was isolated for millennia from the most destructive animal, the human being. The ecosystems are now getting destroyed by ruthless ambition of this biped.

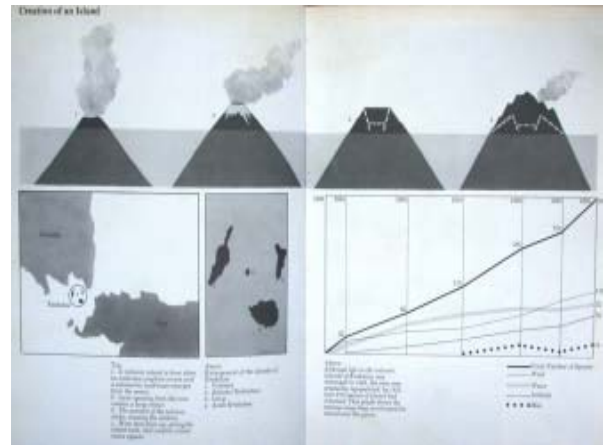
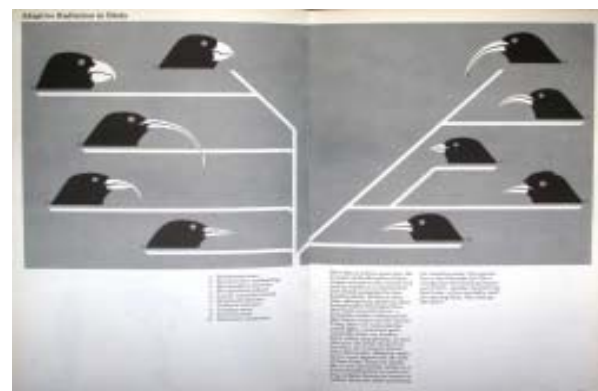


Figure depicting how an island is born by a volcano



Adaptive radiations in birds of Hawaii showing different shapes of beak



Male Peafowl from Sri Lanka

Wild Life of the Islands, because of its uniqueness of the topic, depth of the knowledge of the author, lucidity of language and descriptive illustrations makes this book a collector's item.

Wild Vet

Tumor blocking the vision of a Kite.

Dr. Kiran Shelar

We were presented with a kite which had a mass growing above its left eye and blocking its vision. The tumor was almost 1 inch in diameter and hanging over the left eye. The kite was in distress because of the blindfold caused by the tumor as well as its weight which was making the bird imbalanced towards left side.



On close examination it was found the tumor was only in the upper eyelid and the eye itself was intact and undamaged. The kite was eating in captivity but apprehensive during the flight in aviary because of the compromised vision of the left eye. It was necessary to remove the mass quickly before it grew further and spread to affect the eye.

The kite was prepared for surgery by overnight fasting. It was then sedated. Inhalation Isoflurane anesthetic was used to anesthetize the kite. It was placed in right lateral recumbency and the tumor removed taking care to preserve the eyelid. A small sized Elizabethian collar was made using old X-ray film and applied around its neck.



It made sure that the kite would not be able to scratch and manipulate the surgical site and damage the eye in the process. The mass was given for histopathological analysis to determine the malignancy and source.



The kite was treated with antibiotics post-surgically and was monitored in the aviary. The wound healed without event in a week's time. Fortunately the histopathology report came as non-aggressive tumor which was benign in nature; a big relief! After removal of Elizabethian collar the kite was flying confidently in the flight test so the first opportunity it was released back in the wild after 10 days.



IUCN status : LC (Least Concern)

The species has extremely wide geographical range. The overall population trend is declining but not so rapid to reach the thresholds for Vulnerable.

<http://www.iucnredlist.org/apps/redlist/details/181381/0>

NGO Watch

Name	Research and Action in Natural Wealth Administration (RANWA), Pune
Founder	Dr. Ajay Dixit, Utkarsh Ghate, Vijay Barve, Dr. Shonil Bhagwat, Bhushan Sathe, Anand Gijare, Rahul Khalate, Ketan Latkar
Contact	c/o Bhushan Sathe, 16 Swastishree Society, Near Alankar Police Chowky, Ganshnagar, Pune - 411052 Tel: 98238 12653 (Dr. Ankur Patwardhan) 98228 82011 (Mr. Kapil Sahasrabuddhe) 98506 82197 (Mr. Bhushan Sathe) Email: ranwa@yahogroups.com Website: www.ranwa.org
Date of formation	1992
Jurisdiction area	Mainly Northern Western Ghats but has worked all over India
Main interest area pertaining to nature and environment	Biodiversity assessment and conservation Research: Documentation of plants, animals and human influence in Maharashtra, especially western region, particularly Pune district. Education: Nature trails for general public and school children alike for introduce them to nature, especially plants, birds and butterflies. Action: Plantation of local plant species, supporting environmental agitation, awareness campaigns.
Vision and Mission statement	Vision statement - Biodiversity is a lifeline of the human society. RANWA believes in participatory biodiversity conservation. Mission statement - Linking interdisciplinary and scientific research with participatory biodiversity conservation to strengthen community action.
Remarkable achievements	Major work achievements in the fields of (1) Pune Alive - an urban biodiversity documentation effort is now being referred as a baseline document in saving hills in Pune. (2) Developed a protocol on nursery techniques for 10 RET plant species like Mappia, Sitech Ashok etc (3) Plantation and maintenance of some important medicinal plants in collaboration with forest department and private farmers and horticulturist. (4) Encouraging more than 20 young students to pursue their interest in field biology through small grants which otherwise would have otherwise had gone unnoticed.
Member base	Prof. Madhav Gadgil (Distinguished Fellow), Dr. Ankur Patwardhan (Hon. Secretary), Kapil Sahasrabuddhe, Bhushan Sathe, Raghunandan Velankar, and about 25 core members. There is a network of Friends and associates including professionals and college students supporting all the activities.
Difficulties in running the NGO	High turnover of members, difficult to get volunteers committed for long term

Indian Wildlife Protection Act

Dr. Rajendra Nayak

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Associate Professor, Department of Zoology, K.J. Somaiya College of Science & Commerce,
Vidyavihar (East), Mumbai – 400 077

In the previous issue the bare act of 1972 regarding Chapter I was quoted and in this issue the amendments made in 2002 of Chapter I are included. The sentences/words/paragraphs struck off are old ones of 1972.

THE WILD LIFE (PROTECTION) ACT, 1972

(No. 53 of 1972)

(9th September, 1972)

MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE

(Legislative Department)

New Delhi, the 20th January, 2003/Pausa 30, 1924 (Saka)

The following Act of Parliament received the assent of the President on the 17th January, 2003, and is hereby published for general information:—

THE WILD LIFE (PROTECTION) AMENDMENT ACT, 2002

No. 16 of 2003

[17th January, 2003.]

An Act further to amend the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.

Be it enacted by Parliament in the Fifty third Year of the Republic of India as follows:

Amendment of Long Title

53 of 1972

2. In the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 (hereinafter referred to as the principal Act), for the long title, the following long title shall be substituted, namely:—

~~An Act to provide for the protection of [Wild animals, birds and plants]¹ and for matters connected therewith or ancillary or incidental thereto:~~

~~2 [***]~~

CHAPTER 1

“An Act to provide for the protection of wild animals, birds and plants and for matters connected therewith or ancillary or incidental thereto with a view to ensuring the ecological and environmental security of the country.”

Preliminary

1. Short title, extent, and commencement, - (1)
This Act may be called the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

1. (1) This Act may be called the Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Act, 2002.

(2) It shall come into force on such date as the Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint and different dates may be appointed for different provisions of this Act.

³[(2) It extends to the whole of India, except the State of Jammu and Kashmir.*]

⁴(3) It shall come into force in a State or Union Territory to which it extends, on such date as the Central Government may, by notification, appoint, and different dates may be appointed for different provision of this Act or for different States or Union Territories.

2. Definitions - In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires, -

~~(1) "animal" includes amphibians, birds, mammals, and reptiles, and their young, and also includes, in the cases of birds and reptiles, their eggs.~~

'(1) "animal" includes mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, other chordates and invertebrates and also includes their young and eggs;'

⁵(2) "animal article" means an article made from any captive animal or wild animal, other than vermin, and includes an article or object in which the whole or any part of such animal [has been used and ivory imported into India and an article made there from].

⁶(3) [Omitted 1991.1]

~~(4) "Board" means the Wildlife Advisory Board constituted under subsection (1) of Sec.6;~~

'(4) "Board" means a State Board for Wild Life constituted under sub-section (1) of section 6;'

(5) "captive animal" means any animal, specified in Schedule 1, Schedule II, Schedule III or Schedule IV, which is captured or kept or bred in captivity;

⁷(6) [Omitted 1991.1]

(7) "Chief Wildlife Warden" means the person appointed as such under C1. (a) of sub-section (1) of Sec.4;

⁸[(7A) "Circus" means an establishment, whether stationary or mobile where animals are kept or used wholly or mainly for the purpose of performing tricks or maneuvers;]

~~(8) "closed area" means the area which is declared under sub-section (1) of Sec.37 to be closed to hunting;~~

~~(9) "Collector" means the Chief Officer in charge of the revenue administration of a district;~~

'(9) "Collector" means the chief officer in charge of the revenue administration of a district or any other officer not below the rank of a Deputy Collector as may be appointed by the State Government under section 18B in this behalf;'

(10) "commencement of this Act", in relation to -

(a) a State, means commencement of this Act in that State.

(b) any provision of this Act, means commencement of that provision in the concerned State;

~~(11) "dealer" means any person who carries on the business of buying and selling any captive animal, animal article, trophy, uncured trophy, [meat or specified plant];~~

'(11) "dealer" in relation to any captive animal, animal article, trophy, uncured trophy, meat or specified plant, means a person, who carries on the business of buying or selling any such animal or article, and includes a person who undertakes business in any single transaction;'

(12) "Director" means the person appointed as Director of Wildlife Preservation under Cl (a). of sub-section (1) of Sec. 3;

~~{(12A) "Forest Officer" means the Forest Officer appointed under clause (2) of Sec.2 of the Indian Forest Act, 1927 (1016 of 1927);}~~

'(12A) "Forest officer" means the Forest officer appointed under clause (2) of section 2 of the Indian Forest Act, 1927 or under any other Act for the time being in force in a State;

(12B) "forest produce" shall have the same meaning as in sub clause (b) of clause (4) of section 2 of the Indian Forest Act, 1927;"

(13) [Omitted 1991. ¹¹]

(14) "Government property" means property, referred to in sec.39; [or sec. 17H¹²]

(15) "habitat" includes land, water, or vegetation which is the natural home of any wild animal;

(16) "hunting", with its grammatical variations and cognate expressions, includes,

~~(a) capturing, killing, poisoning, snaring, and trapping or any wild animal and every attempt to do so;~~

~~(b) driving any wild animal for any of purposes specified in sub clause~~

~~(a) killing or poisoning of any wild animal or captive animal and every attempt to do so;~~

~~(b) capturing, coursing, snaring, trapping, driving or baiting any wild or captive animal and every attempt to do so;~~

~~(c) injuring or destroying or taking any part of the body of any such animal, or in the case of wild birds or reptiles, damaging the eggs of such birds or reptiles, or disturbing the eggs or nests of such birds or reptiles;~~

(17) "land" includes canals, creeks, and other water channels, reservoirs, rivers, streams and lakes, whether artificial or natural, [marshes and wetlands and also includes boulders and rocks; ¹³]

(18) "licence" means a licence granted under this Act;

~~¹⁴[(18A) "Live-stock" includes buffaloes, bulls, bullocks, camels, cows, donkeys, goats, horses, mules, pigs, sheep, yak and also includes their young;*]~~

(18A) "livestock" means farm animals and includes buffaloes, bulls, bullocks, camels, cows, donkeys, goats, sheep, homes, mules, yaks, pigs, ducks, geese, poultry and their young but does not include any animal specified in Schedules I to V;

~~(19) "manufacturer" means a manufacturer of animal articles;~~

(19) "manufacturer" means a person who manufactures articles from any animal or plant specified in Schedules I to V and VI, as the case may be;

~~(20) "meat" includes blood, bones, sinew, eggs, fat and flesh, whether raw or cooked, of any wild animal other than vermin;~~

(20) "meat" includes blood, bones, sinew, eggs, shell or carapace, fat and flesh with or without skin, whether raw or cooked, of any wild animal or captive animal, other than a vermin;

(20A) "National Board" means the National Board for Wild Life constituted under section 5A;';

(21) "National Park" means an area declared, whether under sec.35. or sec.38 or deemed, under sub-section (3) of sec.66. to be declared, as a National Park

(22) "notification" means a notification published in the official Gazette;

(23) "permit" means a permit granted under this Act or any rule made there under;

(24) "Person" includes a firm;

'(24A) "protected area means a National Park, a sanctuary, a conservation reserve or a community reserve notified under sections 18, 35, 36A and 36C of the Act;';

(25) "prescribed" means prescribed by rules made under this Act;

¹⁵[(25A)"recognized zoo" means a zoo recognized under section 38H;

~~(25B) "reserve forest" means the forest declared to be reserved by the State Government under~~

~~sec.20. of the Indian Forest Act, 1927 (16 of 1927);*]~~

~~(25B) “reserve forest” means the forest declared to be reserved by the State Government under section 20 of the Indian Forest Act, 1927, or declared as such under any other State Act;~~

~~(26)16 “sanctuary” means an area declared, whether under sec. [26(A)5] or sec 38, or deemed, under sub section (3) of Sec.66 to be declared, as a wildlife sanctuary;~~

(26) “sanctuary” means an area declared as a sanctuary by notification under the provisions of Chapter IV of this Act and shall also include a deemed sanctuary under sub section (4) of section 66;’;

¹⁷[(27) “specified plant “means any plant specified in Schedule VI;*]

~~(28) “special game” means any animal specified in Sec.II;~~

(29) “State Government”, in relation to a Union Territory, means the Administrator of that Union Territory appointed by the President under Art 239 of the Constitutions;

~~(30) “taxidermy”, with its grammatical variations and cognate expressions, means the curing, preparation or preservation of trophies;~~

‘(30) “taxidermy”, with its grammatical variations and cognate expressions, means the curing, preparation or preservation or mounting of trophies;’;

[(30A) “territorial waters” shall have the same meaning as in Sec.3. of Territorial waters, Continental Shelf, Exclusive Economic Zone and other Maritime Zones Act, 1976 (80 of 1976); ¹⁸]

(31) “trophy” means the whole or any part of any captive animal or wild animal, other than vermin, which has been kept or preserved by any means, whether artificial or natural, and includes,

(a) rugs, skins, and specimens of such animals mounted in whole or in part through a process of taxidermy, and

~~(b) antler, horn, rhinoceros horn, feather, nail, tooth;~~

musk, eggs, and nests;

(b) antler, bone, carapace, shell , horn, rhinoceros horn, hair, feather, nail, tooth, tusk, musk, eggs, nests and honeycomb;

(32) “uncured trophy” means the whole or any part of any captive animal, other than vermin, which has not undergone a process of taxidermy, and includes a [freshly killed wild animal ambergris, musk and other animal products];

(33) vehicle” means any conveyance used for movement on land, water or air, and includes buffalo, bull, bullock, camel, donkey, elephant, house, and mule;

(34) “vermin” means any wild animal specified in Sch.V;

(35) “weapon” includes ammunition, bows and arrows, explosives, firearms, hooks, knives, nets, poison, snares, traps, and any instrument or apparatus capable of anaesthetizing, decoying, destroying, injuring or killing an animal;

~~(36) “wild animal” means any animal found wild in nature and includes any animal~~

‘(36) “wild animal” means any animal specified in Schedules I to IV and found wild in nature;’;

~~(37) “wildlife” includes any animal, bees butterflies, crustacean, fish and moths; and aquatic or land vegetation which forms part of any habitat;~~

(37) “wild life” includes any animal, aquatic or land vegetation which forms part of any habitat;

(38) “Wildlife Warden” means the person appointed as such under C1. (b) of sub-section (1) of Sec.4;

[(39) “zoo” means an establishment, whether stationary or mobile, where captive animals are kept for exhibition to the public ~~but does not include a circus and an establishment~~ and includes a circus and rescue centres but does not include an

establishment of a licenced dealer in captive animals. ^{19]}

The Act has been made applicable in various States and Union Territories as under:

1. Andaman and Nicobar, w.e.f. 1st July 1973, vide G.S.R.332 (E), dated 1st July, 1973.

2. Andhra Pradesh, w.e.f. 1st July 1973, vide G.S.R.371 (E), dated 1st August, 1973.

3. Arunachal Pradesh, w.e.f. 15th May 1973.

4. Assam, w.e.f. 25th January 1977, vide G.S.R.33 (E), dated 25th January, 1977.

5. Bihar, w.e.f. 1st February 1973, vide G.S.R.40 (E), dated 1st February, 1973.

6. Dadra and Nagar Haveli, w.e.f. 1st September 1973, vide G.S.R.441(E), dated 1st September, 1973.

7. Delhi, w.e.f. 1st June 1973,

8. Gao Daman and Diu, w.e.f. 16 July 1973, vide G.S.R.629 (E), dated 16th July, 1973.

9. Gujarat, w.e.f. 1st February 1973, vide G.S.R.62 (E), dated 1st February, 1973.

10. Haryana, w.e.f. 12th March July 1973, vide G.S.R.63 (E), dated 12 March, 1973.

11. Himachal Pradesh, w.e.f. 2nd April ly 1973, vide G.S.R.190 (E), dated 2nd April, 1973.

12. Kerala, w.e.f. 1st June 1973, vide G.S.R.293 (E), dated 1st June, 1973.

13. Lakshdweep, w.e.f. 1st November 1973, vide G.S.R.481(E), dated 1st November, 1973.

14. Madhya Pradesh, w.e.f. 25 January 1973, vide G.S.R.28 (E), dated 25 January, 1973.

15. Maharashtra, w.e.f. 1st June 1973, vide

G.S.R.296 (E), dated 1st June, 1973.

16. Manipur, w.e.f. 15th May 1973, vide G.S.R.269 (E), dated 15th May, 1973.

17. Meghalaya, w.e.f. 1st April 1977

18. Mizoram, w.e.f. 1st October 1974, vide G.S.R.407 (E), dated 1st October, 1974.

19. Mysore, w.e.f. 1st July 1973, vide G.S.R.355 (E), dated 1st July, 1973.

20. Nagaland, w.e.f. 18th December 1981, vide G.S.R.668 (E), dated 18thDecember

1 Substituted by Act 44 of 1991, sec. 2(w.e.f. 2.10.1991)

2 Preamble omitted by Act 44 of 1991, sec. 3.

3 Sec. 1(2) It extends, in the first instance, to the whole of the State of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and West Berigal, and to all the Union Territories, and it shall also extend to such other State as may adopt this Act by 44 of 1991, sec 4.

4 (3) "or may become extended in future", after "to which it extends" omitted by Act 44 of 1991, sec 4

5 Sec. 2(2) "and Ivory imported into India and an article made there from;" appended by Act. 44 of 1991, sec 5.

6 Sec. 2 (3) "big game" means any animal specified in Schedule III;" omitted by Act 44 of 1991, sec 5.

7 Sec. 2 (6) "Cattle" includes buffaloes, bulls, bullocks, camels cows domestic, elephants, donkeys, goats, horses, mules, pigs and sheep, and also includes their young," omitted by Act 44 of 1991, sec 5.

8 Sec.2 (7A) inserted by Act 44 of 1991, sec. 5.

9 Sec.2 (11) "meat or specified plant, "appended by Act 44 of 1991, sec.5.

10 Sec.2 (12A) "Inserted by Act 44 of 1991 sec. 5.

11 Sec.2 (13) "game reserve" means an area declared under sec. 36 to be a game reserved;" omitted by Act 44 of 1991. sec. 5.

12 Sec.2 (14) "or sec. 17H;" appended by Act 44 of 1991, sec.5.

13 Sec.2 (17) "marshes and wetlands" inserted after "whether artificial or natural," by Act 44 of 1991, sec.5.

14 Sec.2 (18A) "inserted by Act 44 of 1991 sec. 5.

15 Sec.2 (25A) inserted by Act 44 of 1991 sec. 5.

16 Sec. 2 (26) "26(A)" substituted after "whether under sec. " by Act 44 of 199 1, sec 5.

17 Sec.2 (26A) inserted by Act 44 of 1991 sec. 5.

18 Sec.2 (27) "small game" means any animal specified in sch. IV "substituted by Act 44 of 1991, sec.5.

Sec 2 (30A) inserted by Act 44 of 199 1, sec 5.

19 Sec.2 (39) inserted by Act 44 of 1991, sec 5.

Wildlife Blogs

Aniruddha Dhamorikar

<http://www.indianwildlifeblog.com/>

A blog about wildlife photography, birding, wildlife books and natural history of India by writer and photographer A B Apana.

bangalorephotography@gmail.com

<http://www.walkthewilderness.net/>

A blog on wildlife experiences through photography by Thomas and Shilpy from Bangalore.

suresh_anand@hotmail.com

<http://pankaj-atcrossroads.blogspot.com/>

A blog by writer, photographer and freelance journalist Pankaj Sekhsaria, focusing on environment, wildlife and tribal people of India.

psekhsaria@gmail.com

<http://conservation.in/blog/>

A blog about nature, people, landscapes and conservation issues written by scientists, students and staff of Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF).

ncf@ncf-india.org

<http://thegerrymartinproject.blogspot.com/>

A blog dedicated to create public awareness about our environment by herpetologist Gerry Martin and his staff

gerry@gerrymartin.in

Rare Sighting

Abnormal Silverline *Spindasis abnormis*

Spindasis abnormis, the endemic Abnormal Silverline butterfly of the Western Ghats, southwestern India (Lepidoptera, Lycaenidae)

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Affiliation: Indian Foundation for Butterflies

Abstract: In this article we describe a sighting of the *Spindasis abnormis* butterfly from Kumbharli Ghat, Ratnagiri District, Maharashtra, in the northern Western Ghats. The species is extremely rare, endemic to the Western Ghats, and had not been seen at least for the past several decades. Our record confirms that the species is not endemic to the Nilgiris-Kodagu Districts in the southern Western Ghats, as previously believed, but extends much further north.

Keywords: endemic species; Theclinae; Aphnaeini; Konkan

Introduction: There is renewed interest in butterflies of the Indian Region due to increased awareness among Indian citizens about butterflies, their biology and conservation issues. This is fueling resurgence of natural history in India, with the result that new information is being generated at a rapid pace. In this article we describe sighting of a very rare and endemic butterfly species, and provide notes on its habitat and habits, along with first pictures of a living specimen.

Spindasis abnormis (Moore, 1883), the Abnormal Silverline butterfly (Lycaenidae, Theclinae, Aphnaeini), is very little known and endemic to the Western Ghats. Virtually nothing is published about it besides a handful of records from just two localities. It was described based on males taken from Coonoor (Moore 1883). Coonoor is a small town in the Nilgiris District, Tamil Nadu, southwestern India (11.35°N, 76.82°E), with the average elevation of 1,500m asl (Fig. 1). It is a popular hill station in southern India. The original vegetation of the area was mid-elevation evergreen forest, but the neighborhood of the town is now mostly tea plantations, with occasional small forest fragments.

Moore did not specify the number, origin or collection dates of type specimens, but Wynter-Blyth stated that "The species was originally based on a pair caught at Coonoor in the '80's of the last century." (Wynter-Blyth 1957). Wynter-Blyth further mentioned, "Since then several more have been caught in the same locality and it was also recorded many years ago in Coorg." [see below for Coorg, which is an anglicized version of Kodagu].

Larsen later offered further details: "It was described after a few Coonoor specimens collected in 1880. A very few were then taken in the Coorg area. Florence found additional specimens near Coonoor early this century since then very little additional material has come to hand. One must assume that this South Indian endemic is strictly localized, and in all probability linked to some fairly obscure species of ant, since the genus has one of the closest symbiotic relationships with ants of all the Lycaenidae." (Larsen 1987). The Florence records were also mentioned by Wynter-Blyth (Wynter-Blyth 1945), but Wynter-Blyth and Larsen themselves never encountered any specimens in the Nilgiris. The Kodagu (Coorg) record is by Hannington (Wynter-Blyth 1944), but we are unable to extract the exact locality.

Kodagu is a fairly large and hilly district (total area: 4,100 km², in the neighborhood of 12.42°N, 75.73°E) from southwestern Karnataka, ranging in elevation from 900-1,750m asl. The predominant vegetation type was evergreen forest, but deciduous forests occurred in smaller patches. Coffee and teak plantations now predominate the landscape, although large evergreen forest patches still exist in many parts of the district. The precise habitat of *S. abnormis* in this mosaic is unknown.

Gaonkar mentioned distribution of the species from Tamil Nadu (Coonor), Karnataka (Kodagu) and Maharashtra but not Goa (Gaonkar 1996). Gaonkar has not published the details of his Maharashtra record(s), and the basis of his Maharashtra record(s), if any specimens or photographs exist, is unknown to us.

This is, practically, all the known information on this species. Due to the paucity of records, the species has been described as “Extremely local” and “very rare” (Evans 1932; Wynter-Blyth 1957). Nothing is known of its habits, habitat or exact distribution. Its early stages and larval host plants have not been reported (Robinson *et al.* 2001). It was either not covered in many significant books on Indian butterflies (Antram 1924; Bingham 1907; Kehimkar 2008; Kunte 2000), or covered with only a statement that nothing was known about the species beyond the Coonor records (de Nicéville 1890; Swinhoe 1911-1912). In his meticulously detailed series of papers on butterflies of the erstwhile Bombay Presidency, Thomas Bell did not mention the species in the central and northern Western Ghats in the issue in which he covered other Aphnaeini known from the area by the 1910s (Bell 1919). There are no specimens in the Madras Government Museum (Satyamurti 1966). However, the upper and undersides of both sexes have been illustrated by Swinhoe and d’Abrera from the specimens in the Natural History Museum, London (d’Abrera 1986, p. 605; Swinhoe 1911-1912, plate 735).

Sighting of *Spindasis abnormis* from Kumbharli Ghat, Maharashtra: Kumbharli Ghat, approximately 30 km from the town of Chiplun

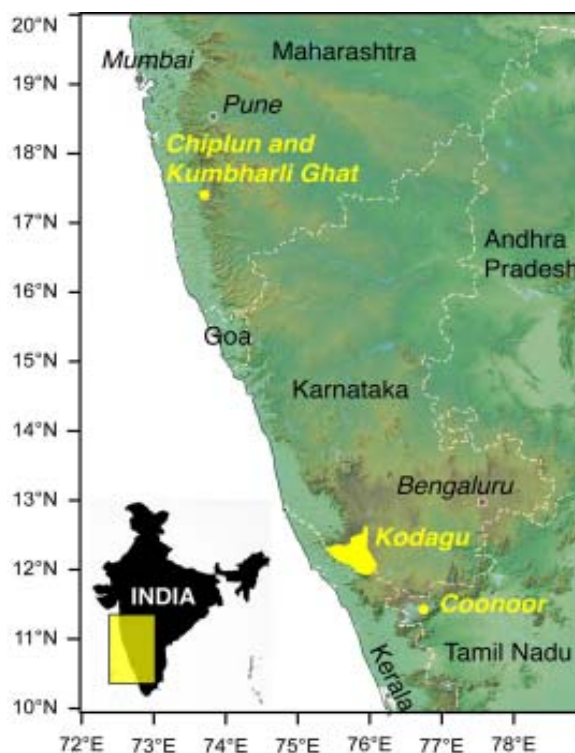


Fig. 1: Map showing localities in the Western Ghats where *Spindasis abnormis* has been recorded so far (prepared by Krushnamegh Kunte).

(17.53°N, 73.52°E), Ratnagiri District, is one of the frequently used passes over the northern Western Ghats (Fig. 1). It is part of a state highway that connects Chiplun on the Konkan (coastal) side of the Western Ghats to Karad, on the eastern plains. The area is still somewhat forested, hill slopes with some small evergreen forest patches interspersed among secondary deciduous and scrub forests. The plateaus, owing to the shallow layer of soil and high-velocity winds, are covered with wind-swept short grass savannahs, with a few shrubs and very stunted trees.

On 5 November 2007, RL initially saw a male *Spindasis*, presumably of *S. abnormis*, resting on low grass on the Kumbharli Ghat (precise location of the sighting taken from Google Maps: 17°23'33.99"N, 73°40'09.33"E, elevation 742m asl). However, it flew out of sight before it could be photographed and its identity confirmed. At 1.30pm, RL and GA soon spotted, photographed and observed a female for five to 10 minutes on this plateau (Fig. 2). It was not a very fresh specimen, its hindwings having lost the tornal portions,

presumably survivor of a predator attack. It was laying eggs on the bark of a *Cassia fistula* L. tree (Fabaceae) at about 2m above the ground, far from any foliage (Fig. 2A). Afterwards it flew to a nearby bush and basked there for a few minutes with the wings 3/4th spread (Fig. 2B). Like the male before, it also soon disappeared, its extremely swift flight being too difficult to follow.

KK later identified the species based on the photographs sent by RL and GA. On learning the identity and rarity of the species, RL and GA visited the spot once again on 7 November 2007 to try to locate the eggs and in the hopes of raising butterflies from eggs. However, they failed to locate any eggs or caterpillars, and the opportunity to study the early stages of this very rare species was lost. *Cassia fistula* remains an unconfirmed larval host plant for this species. However, similar to other *Spindasis*, caterpillars of *S. abnormis* may turn out to be polyphagous since *Spindasis* seem to rely more on the presence of specific ants rather than specific plants to complete their life cycle.

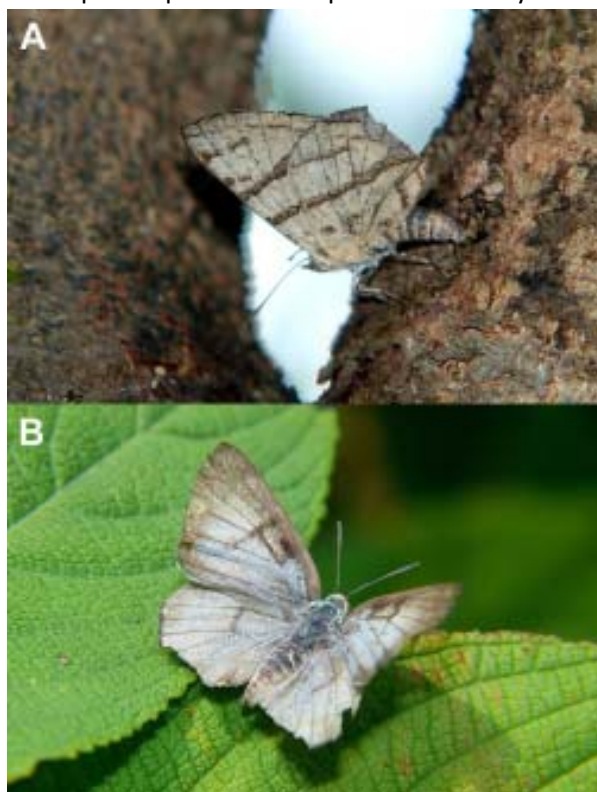


Fig. 2: *Spindasis abnormis* female at Kumbharli Ghat near Chiplun, Maharashtra, northern Western Ghats, on 5 November 2007; A: ovipositing on the bark of *Cassia fistula* tree (Fabaceae), and B: basking. Photographs by Gaurav Agavekar.

Importance of this sighting: This sighting is significant for several reasons. First, it is the first published sighting of the species in the past at least 70 years since Florence's record, as quoted above from Larsen's paper. Second, this is only the third locality from where the species is now known, the other two being Coonoor and Kodagu (Fig. 1). Importantly, this is the first confirmed spot record outside the Nilgiris-Kodagu area (the specifics of Gaonkar's Maharashtra record being unknown to us), which shows that the species is not highly restricted within the Western Ghats as previously believed. We have also reported its specific habitat, although it likely uses other habitat types. *Spindasis*, as a generality, use open, sunny patches, frequenting shrubs and low herbs on the edges of deciduous and evergreen forests. Our sighting of *S. abnormis* suggests that it uses similarly secondary habitats.

Although this sighting adds to the scanty information on this species, our pursuit of this species, specifically its males that we have not yet been able to photograph, continues. Our top priority is to study its early stages. We surely hope, however, that the next sightings will not be as far apart as our sighting has been from that of Florence.

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More of this species on : <http://ifoundbutterflies.org/10-lycaenidae/abnormal-silverline>

ORIENTAL DWARF KINGFISHER (ODKF)

Dr. Vaibhav Deshmukh



Scientific Name: *Ceyx erithaca* Linneaus 1758

Synonym: *Ceyx erithacus*

Subspecies in India: *C. e. erithaca* nominate race where the male has more violet on its crown.;

C. e. macrocarus Oberholster, 1917 which is found in Andaman and Nicobar Islands. This race differs from the nominate race by having darker crown and absence of black spot on the forehead.

This is one of the beautiful kingfishers found in India. It is also known by different names as Three-toed Kingfisher, Black-backed Kingfisher, Black-backed three-toed Kingfisher, Indian Forest Kingfisher and Oriental Kingfisher.

The name is abbreviated to ODKF in Indian birders.

ODKF is distributed in the Oriental Region as far east as Philippines. This species is a seasonally partial migrant within the region.

It is predominantly found in tropical and moist deciduous forests up to 1000 meters. The flight is fast, darting and along the waterways in the forests. The call is similar to Common Kingfisher but no so loud. The call abruptly terminates when it comes to perch.

Near Western coast the bird reaches Konkan during early June whereby soon after arrival the courtship begins. After the monsoon, the breeding season is over and the bird migrates to South Konkan and Sri Lanka.

Though primarily a fish eater also known to feed on frogs, freshwater crabs, insects and spiders.

The bird builds nests in the bank of the dry streams. There is an upward tunnel ending in an egg chamber. The clutch size is of about 4-5 eggs. Incubation, mainly done by female, lasts for 3 weeks.



Both parents share the responsibility of feeding the chicks. Chicks are fed with geckos, skinks, frogs, mantises, grasshoppers etc. The chicks fledge at around three weeks of age.

Bird with different feeds



As per the 2009 assessment by IUCN. The population trend shows decline however the exact estimation of the population has not been done. Due to its large geographical range the status of this species is Least Concerned. It is locally extinct in Singapore.

Kabini and Vythiri

Girish Vaze

Kabini is one of the most popular wildlife destinations of Karnataka. It is 80 km away from Mysore and 205 km from Bangalore. It comprises the south-eastern part of Nagarhole National Park. Situated on the banks of River Kabini, this forest reserve is spread over 55 acres of forestland, steep valleys, and water bodies and is part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. I have visited central Indian jungles of Pench, Tadoba and Kanha and seen animals and birds in plenty. After visiting the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, I realized that although the central Indian forest region has abundance, the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve has wealth.

We set off from Bangalore and our first halt was at Ranganthittu. This is a very small (67 sq km) sanctuary, just 10 kms from Mysore. It comprises of 6 islets on the banks of Kaveri River and is home to many water birds. We hired a boat for ourselves and wandered around for about an hour in the boat. We got some great views of open-billed storks and painted storks, but what really impressed me was how unafraid the birds were even when we approached them really close.



Painted stork

Among the birds we saw here were Open-billed Storks in nests and with chicks, painted storks, thick-knees, egrets, night herons, black headed ibis, bats, cormorants and nests of swifts. It was a superb experience. We also saw many crocodiles.

Thereafter we left for Kabini and arrived at the Kabini River Lodges resort at around 1.15 pm. This is a huge resort right on the banks of the kabini river. It has some colonial style rooms and bungalows as

well as tents etc. It's a very well wooded resort with sprawling lawns and many pretty flowers, especially Bougainville.

After lunch, we got into Tata estate jeeps and proceeded to the forest. This forest is really amazing. It is so green, like emeralds shining in the sun. It actually reminded me of photos I had seen of the emerald island: Scotland.



Thick knee

Everything was so pure and green!!!! Adding to the verdant green-scape were scattered trees of laburnum in full bloom. They added the extra punch to the already fantastic landscape. The first sighting we had was of Gaur with young. They were lounging placidly at the side of the road and seemed oblivious to our presence. A little ahead, we saw elephants also with young although they were more wary of us. Ahead we saw many chital, peacocks, grey jungle-fowls, black-rumped woodpeckers Malabar giant squirrel etc.



Peafowl male

I was already content with the quality of the sightings and were more or less on our way back when we saw a Blue Faced Malkoha (a lifer for me). A little ahead, we saw what was, for me, a highlight of the trip: a male Malabar Trogon. It was sitting nicely in the sun, on a branch, just about 10 feet above the road.



Mother and calf Asian elephant

Unfortunately, our driver being probably not really interested in birds, didn't stop in time and it flew away to a further branch and then deeper into the forest. Yet we got wonderful views of this colorful bird; another lifer for me. Now totally content with the sightings we started on the way back and as luck would have it, we saw the king of the jungle: the Tiger!!!!



Tiger crossing a road

It was walking on a road, perpendicular to the road we were on and we got good views of it. Its always a special pleasure to see a tiger roaming around majestically in the forests.

In the early morning, we went on another jungle safari. No sooner had we entered the forest than we saw some jeeps by the side of the roads and saw 2 leopards. They were walking around 30-40 feet from the road, parallel to the road. We got wonderful, clear views of them when they went from one bamboo thicket to another. And here is the only real complaint I have of the wildlife scene in Kabini. I felt that the drivers were too impatient and forceful in their effort to give good views to the tourists. If we had all patiently waited, it was likely that the leopards would have crossed the road. But in their quest for good viewing angles, all the drivers created too much ruckus and drove the leopards into deeper bushes. Still, it was exhilarating.

After that, we went into deeper forest and got great views of a wild dog family with young, from about 25 feet away. They were walking along the road in front of us until they were disturbed by another jeep coming from the front and went into the forest. On this ride, we got very nice sightings of wild boar, barking deer, more elephants, sambar etc. Among the other sightings we had were woolly necked storks, many racket tailed drongos, common cuckoo shrikes etc. In the evening we went on the boat ride in the Kabini backwaters and saw many cormorants on beautiful perches, crocodiles, a tortoise, elephants, chital, sambars, wild boars on the banks and some painted storks and woolly necked storks to name a few.

The next day we went on some different roads. We also saw two chital stags fighting. They were reared up on the hind legs and fighting with their forelegs. Alas, once again our driver, in his impatience, took the jeep too near them and drove them away. We also saw Red Spurfowls (another lifer for me) and scared the life out of some sambar which were lounging around in a waterhole because we came up on the unawares just beyond a turn on the road.



Sambar female



Gaur

Vythiri is in Waynaad District of Kerala. It is about 60 kms from Calicut and is at around 4000 feet above sea level. All around, the Nilgiri hills rise in their green cloaked splendor and there are many coffee plantations at the lower levels of these hills. It's a truly beautiful area.

After a long journey, made longer because we lost our way a couple of times, we arrived at Vythiri and were completely unable to find the resort. The resort is actually nestled quite high in the Nilgiri hills and is only reached by a rough 5 km long road which can only be traversed by 4 by 4 jeeps. These are provided by the Blue Ginger resort. Although the resort is inaccessible, its not at all inhospitable. Its bang in the middle of the Nilgiri hills in lush rainforest, surrounded by 50 ft tall trees and alive with the calls of myriad birds and insects. The forest starts right where the rooms end. We were in forest facing rooms and the forest started immediately outside our window. The hillside sloped down away from us with the result that the canopy of the trees was at our eye level.



Yellow Browed Bulbul

In the 3 magical days we spent here, we saw Velvet Fronted Nuthatches, Heart Spotted Woodpeckers, Yellow Browed Bulbuls, Draco (flying lizard), Malabar Giant Squirrels and Grey Headed Canary

Flycatchers all at eye level and around 20-30 feet away from us. It was totally unbelievable.



Velvet Fronted Nuthatch

One of the best memories I have of this trip was watching a draco take off from a tree around 25 feet away, towards a tree which was 12 feet away from me. I saw the wonderful flight from above and really close. I thought I was smack bang in the middle of a National Geographic program!!!! Apart from birds and many butterflies (including many sighting of Southern Birdwing), we also saw a tiny frog (don't know which one), a giant black colored scorpion (8 inches long) and a huge white colored snail. These had come out into the open after the rains in the evening on the second day. At night, the forest right outside the window was alive with tens of fireflies. It was truly a magical and memorable experience.



Draco displaying

The Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve is really a remarkably beautiful and bountiful area and I really hope that its stays that way for ever.