



Exploration of Butterfly Species from Salekasa tehsil of Gondia District, Maharashtra State, India

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Abstract

The present investigation was done about the study of butterfly species and their conservation from selected sites from Salekasa tehsil of Gondia District, Maharashtra State. A total 51 Butterfly species belonging to five families were recorded during study of one year from June 2023 to May 2024, with Nymphalidae as the dominant family. Out of these, 13 species were abundant (25%), 4 species were very common (8%), 23 species were common (45%), 9 species were occasional (18%) and 2 species were rare (4%). The study of seasonal variation revealed that 45 species were present in monsoon (38%) which increased to 49 species in post-monsoon (41%), a least of 25 species in pre-monsoon (21%) season and 19 species were recorded throughout the year during all three seasons. Different butterfly species attract the selected study sites as there is a hilly area with flowering plants and trees. Comparatively, Hazra Falls having many more butterfly species (46) followed by Halbitola (34), a less species of butterflies recorded from Gadmata Pahadi (31) and 20 species have commonly occurred at all selected three study sites.

Keywords: Butterfly species, Salekasa tehsil, Gondia district, Maharashtra.

Introduction

Butterflies belonging to the order Lepidoptera, are one of the most well-studied groups of insects. Butterflies are most conspicuous and attractive colourful insects having long and thin antennae which fold their wings over the back vertically. Due to their attractiveness and omnipresence they have acquired a niche in the prose and poetry of various cultures. Therefore, they have made

excellent subject for natural history observations and scientific studies. The butterfly fauna of India is rich and diverse due to its varied climates and habitats. India, with its vast array of ecosystems ranging from tropical rainforests to alpine meadows, supports a rich diversity of butterfly species.

The butterflies have great economic importance as pollinators and also serve as indicators of environmental health (Gaikwad *et al.*, 2015). They are important links in the terrestrial food web and food chain component of birds, reptiles, and some insects (Laghude *et al.*, 2019). Nature is the gallery of colour and art and butterflies take part in the colour gallery as a delegate of living things. Butterflies are set up all over the world and in all types of environments (Roy *et al.*, 2022). Butterfly research in Maharashtra and India has revealed significant insights into the diversity, distribution and ecology of these insects. In India, more than 1433 species of butterflies (Kunte, 2024) were reported, out of these some species become extinct every year. 167 species were recorded from Vidarbha region (Tiple, 2011) which is the Eastern part of Maharashtra State.

Different researchers of Gondia district explored some areas like Amgaon (Danta and Jha, 2017), Tirora (Bhonde *et al.*, 2023) and Arjuni/Morgaon (Ganvir *et al.*, 2017) for the butterfly diversity, but even though some areas are away from the study of butterflies. No one has ever studied the butterfly fauna of the selected study area, this is the first such attempt. To overcome this paucity of information, the present scientific study was launched to make the preliminary list of the

Butterfly species of the selected area from Salekasa tehsil of Gondia district, Maharashtra, India. Hence, this research contributes to the theoretical knowledge and conservation of the butterflies in and around the selected study area.

Materials and Methods

Study Area

Three sites were selected, the first site is Hazra Fall (21.279192, 80.572673) in Gondia district which is very famous waterfall in Salekasa tehsil. It is a major tourist attraction during the rainy season which is located 9.5 km from Salekasa and visitors can enjoy the sight of natural vegetation. This place is also ideal for camping as well as trekking activities. It is a spectacular view covered with dense forest and hills. Second site is Halbitola pond surrounding area with some flowering plants and trees. Halbitola village (21.291926, 80.501147) is situated 2 km away from Salekasa tehsil with a small hilly area. Third site is *Gadmata Pahadi* (21.304368, 80.475592) which is another hilly area having *Devi* temple very close 1 km from Salekasa with vegetation having dense trees and flowering plants. All the study sites are around Salekasa within a radius of 10 km.



Fig-1: Satellite Views of Site-1: Hazra Falls (HF), Site-2: Halbitola (HT) and Site-3: GadmataPahadi (GP)

Survey, Identification and Analysis

The aim of the study was to produce report of species of butterflies observed over short period and hence random observations were conducted from June 2023 to May 2024. Observations were made by direct visual encounter method. Study

survey was conducted throughout the day by fortnightly visits during good weather conditions. The observations were made with the help of Olympus binocular and photos were captured by using Nikon D3200 and Nikon D7100 (Nikon Inc. Tokyo, Japan) cameras. The recorded species were identified with the help of photographs by

using keys and methods suggested in manuals and field guides by (Mohapatra *et al.*, 2012), (Sevilleja *et al.*, 2019) , (Evans, 1932), (Wikipedia, 2024) and available publications (Ganvir *et al.*, 2017;Virani and Madavi, 2021) were adopted.

To study the seasonal variations in Butterfly abundance, the entire year was divided into three seasons. The three seasons of the year are monsoon from June to September, post-monsoon from October to January and pre-monsoon from February to May. Mendeley software was used for the insertion of citations and references.

Results

The study revealed that a total 51 Butterfly species belonging to five families were recorded during one-year survey at selected study area from Salekasa tehsil of Gondia district in

Maharashtra. Out of these, a maximum 23species were recorded from Nymphalidae which acts as the dominant family. As per local status, 13 species were abundant (25%), 4 species very common (8%), 23 species common (45%), 9 species occasional (18%) and 2 species rare (4%). The study of seasonal variation revealed that 45 species were present in monsoon (38%) which increased to 49 species in post-monsoon (41%), a least of 25 species in pre-monsoon (21%) season, and 19 species were recorded throughout the year during all three seasons. Comparatively, Hazra Falls has more 46 butterfly species followed by Halbitola 34 species, a less 31 species of butterflies recorded from Gadmata Pahadi, and 20 species commonly occurred at all selected three study sites. There was a vast diversity of butterflies at all three selected study sites as there is a hilly area with flowering plants and trees.

Table-1: Preliminary List of Butterflies from Salekasa tehsil of Gondia district, Maharashtra

Sr. No.	Common Name	Scientific Name	Local Status	Site Presence	Seasonal Occurrence
(I) Family: Papilionidae					
1	Common Jay	<i>Graphium doson</i>	C	HF, HT, GP	M, PoM, PrM
2	Tailed Jay	<i>Graphium agamemnon</i>	C	HF, HT	M, PoM, PrM
3	Common Rose	<i>Pachliopta aristolochiae</i>	VC	HF, HT, GP	PoM, PrM
4	Crimson Rose	<i>Pachliopta hector</i>	VC	HF, GP	PoM, PrM
5	Common Mormon	<i>Papilio polytes</i>	C	HF, HT, GP	M, PoM, PrM
6	Lime Butterfly	<i>Papilio demoleus</i>	VC	HF, HT, GP	M, PoM, PrM
(II) Family: Pieridae					
7	Common Grass yellow	<i>Eurema hecabe</i>	A	HF, HT, GP	M, PoM
8	Small Grass Yellow	<i>Eurema brigitta</i>	C	HF, HT, GP	M, PoM, PrM
9	Common Emigrant	<i>Catopsilia pomona</i>	C	HT, GP	M, PoM
10	Mottled Emigrant	<i>Catopsilia pyranthe</i>	C	HF, GP	M, PoM, PrM
11	Common Gull	<i>Cepora nerissa</i>	C	HF, HT	M, PoM
12	Small Orange Tip	<i>Colotis etrida</i>	C	HF	M, PoM
13	Common Jezebel	<i>Delias eucharis</i>	C	HF	PoM
14	Yellow Orange Tip	<i>Ixias pyrene</i>	O	HF	M, PoM
15	Psyche	<i>Leptosia nina</i>	O	HF	M, PoM
16	Spotless Grass Yellow	<i>Eurema laeta</i>	A	HF, HT, GP	M, PoM

(III) Family: Nymphalidae					
17	Tawny Coster	<i>Acraea terpsichore</i>	C	HF,GP	M, PoM, PrM
18	Common Castor	<i>Ariadne merione</i>	O	HF	M, PoM, PrM
19	Angled Castor	<i>Ariadne ariadne</i>	A	HF, HT, GP	M, PoM
20	Plain Tiger	<i>Danaus chrysippus</i>	A	HF, HT, GP	M, PoM, PrM
21	Striped Tiger	<i>Danaus genutia</i>	A	HF, HT, GP	M, PrM
22	Blue Tiger	<i>Tirumala limniace</i>	C	HF, HT	M, PoM, PrM
23	Glassy tiger	<i>Parantica aglea</i>	R	HF	M, PoM
24	Common Indian Crow	<i>Euploea core</i>	C	HF, HT, GP	M, PoM, PrM
25	Great Eggfly	<i>Hypolimnas bolina</i>	C	HF, HT, GP	M
26	Danaid Eggfly	<i>Hypolimnas misippus</i>	O	HF, HT	M, PoM
27	Grey Pansy	<i>Junonia atlites</i>	C	HF,GP	PoM, PrM
28	Peacock Pansy	<i>Junonia almana</i>	A	HF, HT, GP	M, PoM, PrM
29	Joker	<i>Byblia ilithyia</i>	C	HF	PoM, PrM
30	Blue Pansy	<i>Junonia orithya</i>	A	HF, HT, GP	M, PoM
31	Chocolate Pansy	<i>Precis iphita</i>	VC	HF, HT	M, PoM, PrM
32	Commander	<i>Moduza procris</i>	C	HF	M, PoM
33	Common Leopard	<i>Phalanta phalantha</i>	C	HF	M, PoM, PrM
34	Common Sailer	<i>Neptis hylas</i>	C	HF, HT, GP	M, PoM, PrM
35	Common Nawab	<i>Polyura athamas</i>	O	HF	M, PoM
36	Lemon Pansy	<i>Junonia lemonias</i>	A	HF, HT, GP	M, PoM, PrM
37	Common Evening Brown	<i>Melanitis leda</i>	A	HF, HT, GP	M, PoM, PrM
38	Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>	C	HT, GP	M, PoM
39	Baronet	<i>Symphaedra nais</i>	C	HT, GP	PoM, PrM
(IV) Family: Lycaenidae					
40	Zebra Blue	<i>Leptotes plinius</i>	A	HT, GP	M, PoM
41	Common Line Blue	<i>Prosotas nora</i>	O	HF, HT	M, PoM
42	Gram Blue	<i>Euchrysops cnejus</i>	C	HF, GP	M, PoM
43	Small Cupid	<i>Chilades parrhasius</i>	C	HF, HT	M, PoM
44	Plains Cupid	<i>Luthrodes pandava</i>	O	HT, GP	M, PoM
45	Rounded Pierrot	<i>Tarucus extricatus</i>	O	HF, GP	M, PoM
46	Lesser Grass Blue	<i>Zizina otis</i>	A	HF, HT, GP	M, PoM
47	Tiny Grass Blue	<i>Zizula hylax</i>	C	HF, HT	M, PoM
48	Bright Babul Blue	<i>Azanus ubaldus</i>	O	HF, HT	M, PoM, PrM

(V) Family: HesperIIDae					
49	Brown Awl	<i>Badamia exclamationis</i>	A	HF, HT, GP	M, PoM, PrM
50	Indian Skipper	<i>Hesperia sassacus</i>	R	HF	M, PoM
51	Rice Swift	<i>Borbo cinnara</i>	A	HF, HT, GP	M, PoM

Status: **A** = Abundant (75-100%), **VC** = Very Common (50-75%), **C** = Common (25-50%), **O** = Occasional (10-25%), **R** = Rare (< 10%).

Sites: **HF** = Hazra Falls, **HT** = Halbitola, **GP** = Gadmata Pahadi.

Seasons: **M** = Monsoon (June to September), **PoM** = Post-monsoon (October to January), **PrM** = Pre-monsoon (February to May).

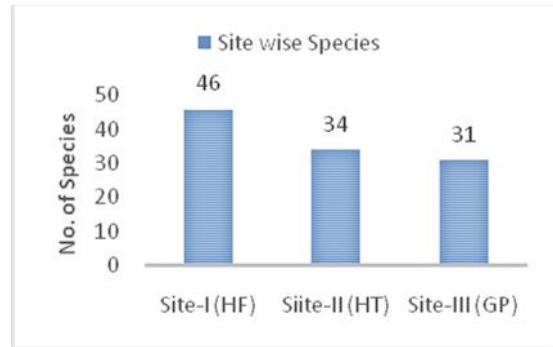
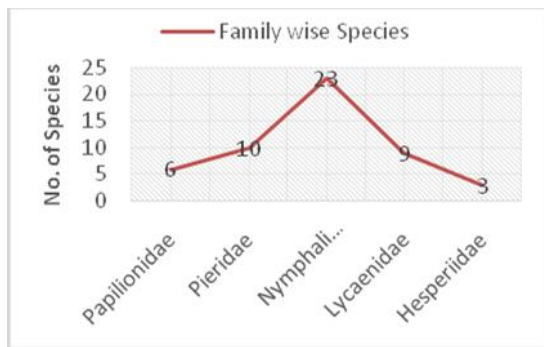


Fig.-2: Family wise Species Distribution Fig.-3: Site wise Species Occurrence

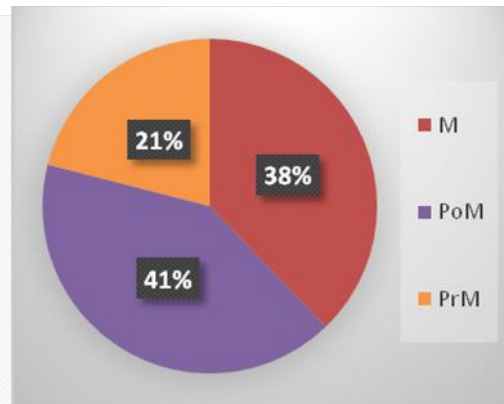
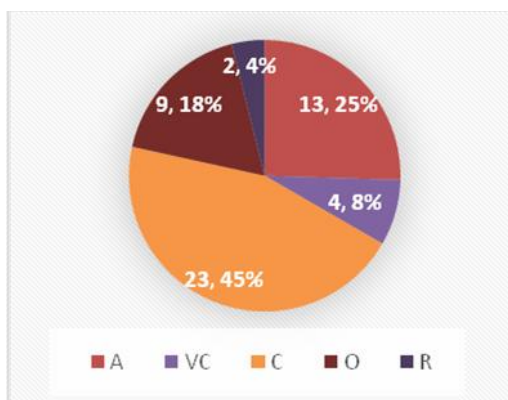
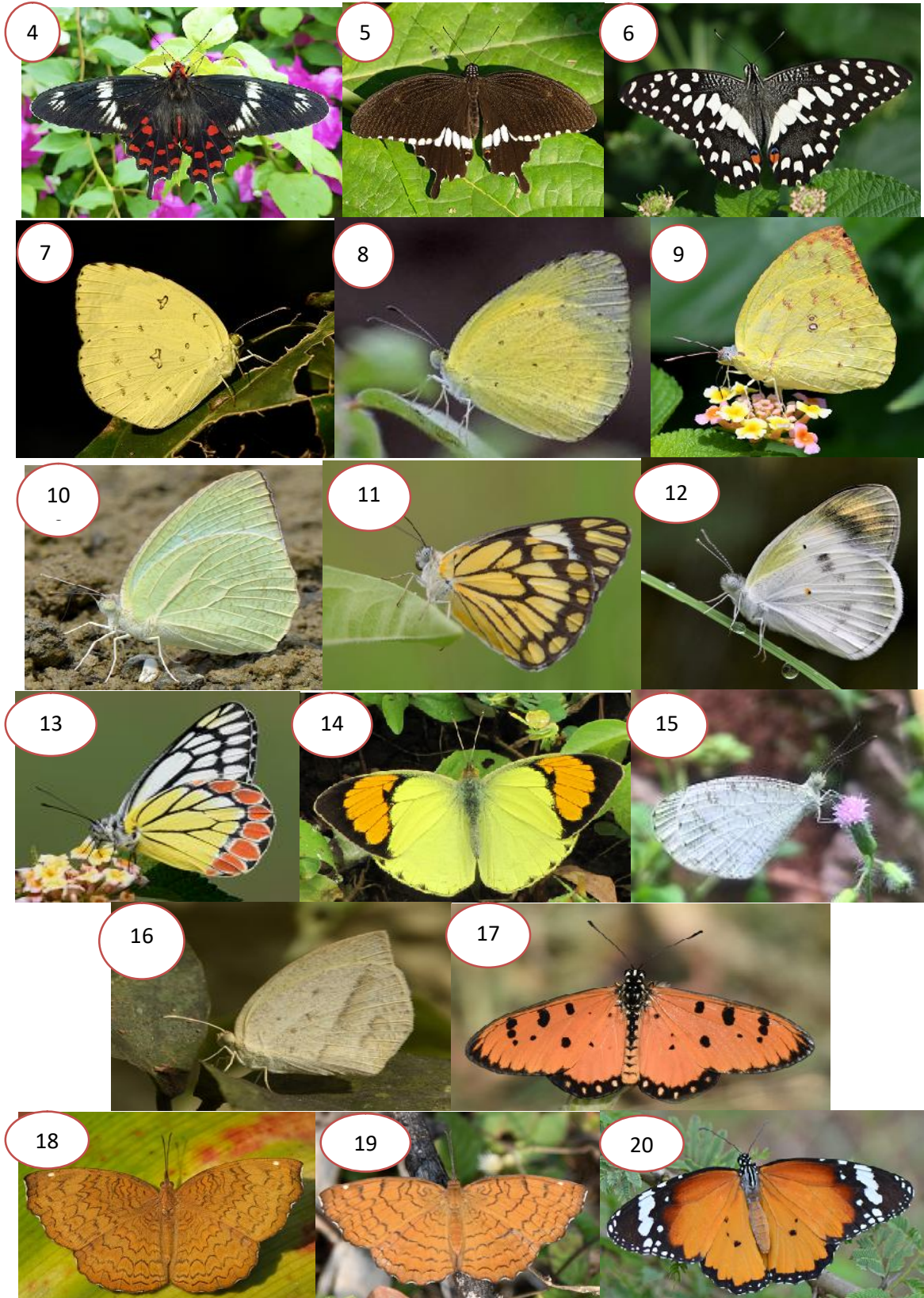
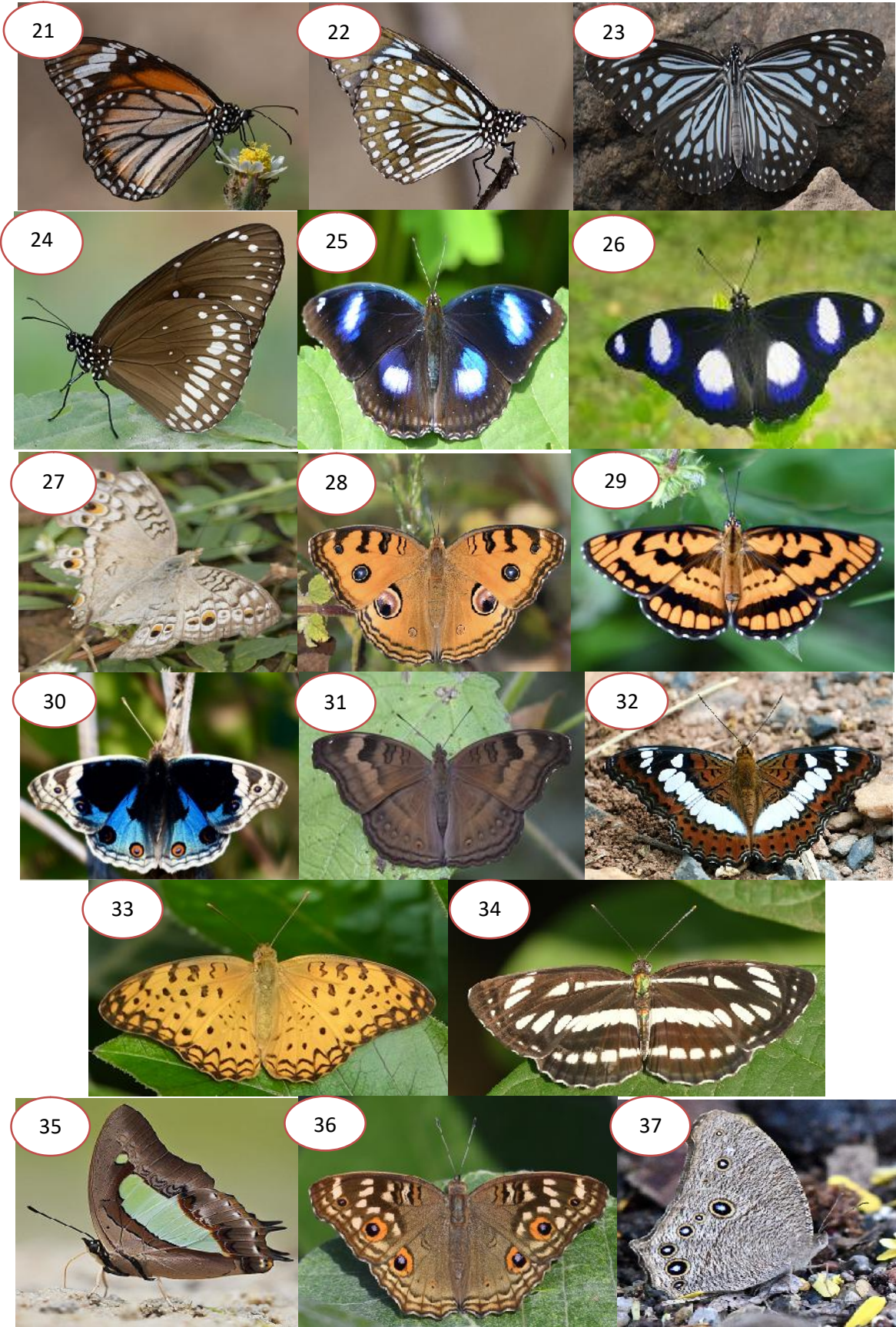


Fig.-4: Local Status of Species

Fig.-5: Seasonal Variation of Species







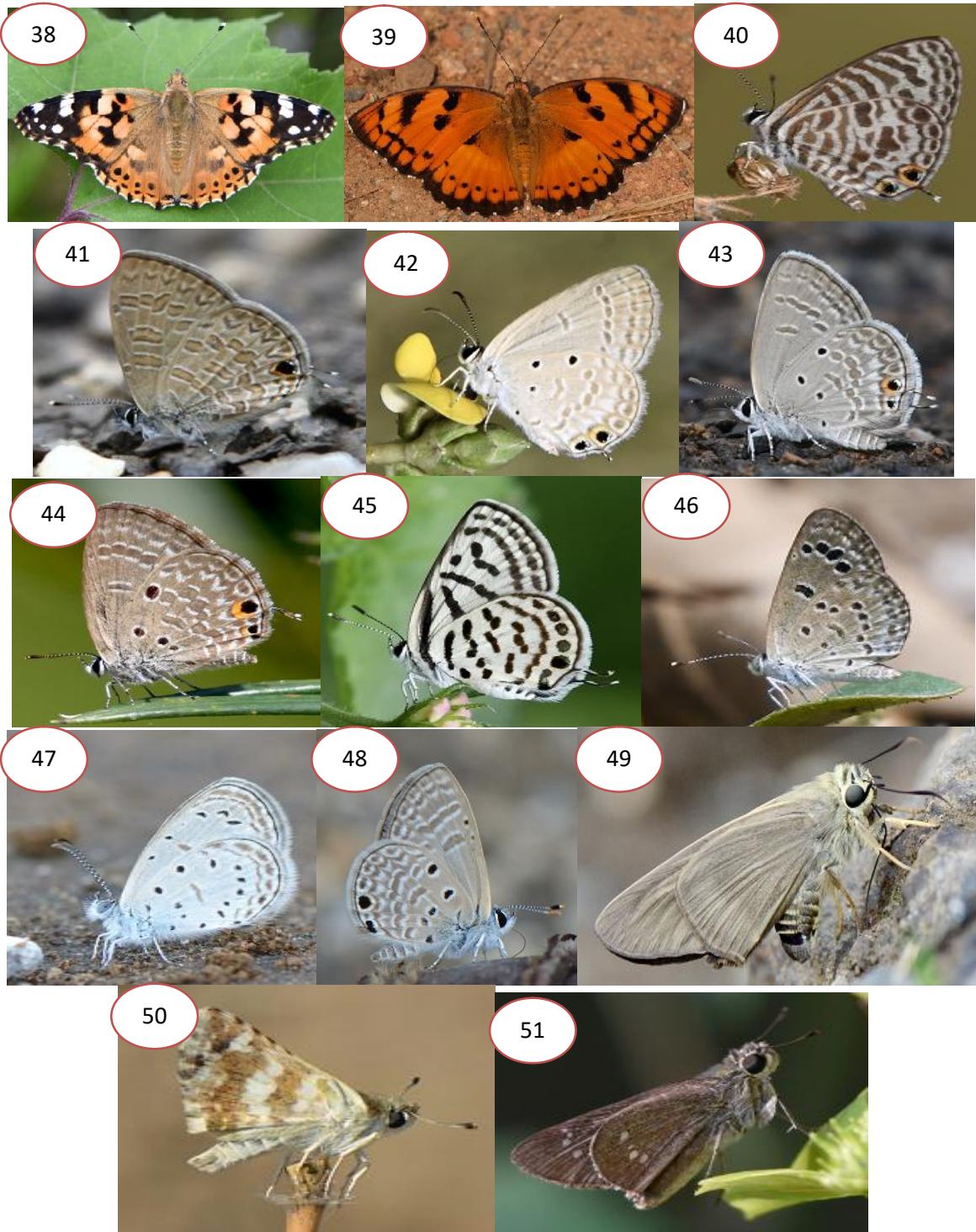


Fig.-6: Photographs of Butterfly Species - Sr. No. as shown in Table No. 1

Discussion

Occurrence of 59 butterfly species that included 21 unique species and 9 species listed in the threatened category from Trishna Wildlife Sanctuary in South Asia (Majumder *et al.*, 2013).

During the study along the elevation gradient of Eastern Himalaya, a total of 2749 butterflies representing 161 species and six families were observed (Acharya and Vijayan, 2015). Butterfly species covering 5 families and 73 genera of order Lepidoptera with 15 rare species were recorded at

Namdapha Tiger Reserve, in Changlong district, Arunachal Pradesh (Sethy *et al.*, 2014). During the study at Solan district from the northeast region of Himachal Pradesh, 105 species of butterflies belonging to 5 families of 72 genera were recorded (Bogtapa, 2015). 53 Butterfly species from 36 genera and 5 families were recorded from Indo-Burmese hotspot-Tripura (Lodh and Agarwala, 2016). A Total of 20 species of butterfly representing 4 families and 17 genera have been recorded from forest habitats of Warangal district of Telangana (Narayana, 2017). 138 butterfly species were recorded at six forest ranges in Nagarhole National Park (NNP), Karnataka (Basavarajappa *et al.*, 2018). The study from five different areas of Dinhatra subdivision, West Bengal, India reports 40 butterfly species (Roy *et al.*, 2022).

The study has recorded 91 Butterfly species belonging to family Papilionidae, Pieridae, Nymphalidae, Lycaenidae and Hesperidae and 65 genera from North Maharashtra (Kharat *et al.*, 2018). 45 Butterfly species were recorded from the forest of Karjat from Ahmednagar district as belonging to 33 genera in 5 families (Laghude *et al.*, 2019). The study of the diversity of butterflies in the Gogate Jogalekar college campus, Ratnagiri reveals a total 34 species of butterflies (Dev *et al.*, 2020). 87 butterfly species were recorded dominated by family Nymphalidae from the Isapur Wildlife Sanctuary, Maharashtra (Virani and Madavi, 2021).

In Vidarbha region, 167 species of butterflies belonging to 90 genera representing five families were reported (Tiple, 2011). Total 145 species of butterflies were recorded at the eight study sites, of which 62 species were new records for the Nagpur city (Tiple and Khurad, 2009). A total of 122 species of butterflies were recorded belonging to 5 families and 76 genera from Gosekhurd region of Godavari basin across Waingang River, Central India (Patil *et al.*, 2019). 113 As many as 37 species of butterflies belonging to 26 genera and 6 families were recorded from Phaltan region of Satara district, Maharashtra (Gaikwad *et al.*, 2015). 84 Butterfly

species were recorded from Rawanwadi Reservoir Bhandara, Maharashtra, India (Patil *et al.*, 2017).

With reference to the other sites in Gondia district, a total 51 Butterfly species were recorded from Salekasa tehsil. Only 44 species of butterflies were recorded from agricultural field at Arjuni/Morgaon tehsil (Ganvir *et al.*, 2017), 36 species from Tirora tehsil (Bhonde *et al.*, 2023) and 28 species from Amgaon tehsil (Danta and Jha, 2017) of Gondia district were recorded. As compared to the studies in different area of Gondia district, there was much more Butterfly species occurrence at the selected study sites from Salekasa tehsil.

Conclusion

Studying butterfly diversity is essential for understanding and preserving biodiversity, monitoring environmental health and advancing scientific knowledge. Butterflies play critical ecological roles, serve as indicators of environmental change and offer numerous benefits for education, economy and cultural heritage. Protecting butterfly diversity is not only crucial for maintaining healthy ecosystems but also for ensuring the well-being of human societies. At all three selected study sites, there was a vast diversity of Butterflies as there is hilly area with flowering plants and trees. Butterflies are seasonal in their occurrence as they were common for a few months and were rare or absent in other parts of the year. There was variation in the encounter of the butterfly during the monsoon, post-monsoon and in pre-monsoon seasons due to the sensitivity to the changes in the habitat and climate which affects their distribution and abundance. Comparatively, Hazra Falls having much more butterfly species followed by Halbitola pond surrounding area and less species of Butterflies recorded from Gadmata Pahadi. Some small streams at Hazra Falls and Gadmata Pahadi; a pond at Halbitola with flowering nectar plants and a dense vegetation with availability of water resources supports the Butterfly species.

High butterfly diversity often reflects a rich and stable ecosystem. Studying butterflies can help to identify biodiversity areas that are particularly valuable for conservation. Protecting these areas ensures the preservation of entire ecosystems and the myriad species they support. Future research should focus on long-term monitoring of butterfly populations, the impacts of climate change on species distribution, and the effectiveness of conservation measures. Conservation strategies should include habitat preservation, the establishment of butterfly reserves and community engagement in conservation efforts. Sustainable development practices should be promoted to balance ecological and economic interests. As in Gondia district, Paddy is the main crop and butterflies helps for pollination process during ripening stage of the Rice crop. Hence, there is need of conservation of the butterflies biodiversity at this selected study area of Salekasa tehsil of Gondia district, Maharashtra State.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest

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