BUTTERFLIES OF MELGHAT TIGER RESERVE, MAHARASHTRA WITH NOTES ON THEIR ABUNDANCE, STATUS AND LARVAL HOST PLANTS

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Key Words:

Butterflies, Melghat, Abundance, larval host plants.

ABSTRACT:

This paper presents the data on the butterfly fauna of Melghat Tiger Reserve (MTR) with abundance, status and host plants. Overall 101 species of butterflies from 8 families and 19 subfamilies were found during the study period. The larval host plants (101) of different butterflies were also listed. Family-wise occurrence of the species was found to be Papilionidae- 9, Pieridae - 16, Danaidae - 06, Satyridae - 10, Nymphalidae - 22, Riodinidae - 01, Lycaenidae - 23 and Hesperiidae - 14. It was found that 22 species of butterflies are very common, 21 species are common, 16 species are not rare/ occasional and 21 species are rare, 17 species are very rare and 04 species are locally common in occurrence in MTR.

INTRODUCTION:

Documentation of biodiversity is basic need for management planning for conservation. Melghat Tiger Reserve (MTR) is a very popular wilderness among nature lovers. It is the one of the first nine Tiger Reserves in India, established in 1972. Geographical location of Melghat region is 20⁰51' to 21⁰46 N and to 76⁰ 38 to 77⁰33E. It is spread in 3970 sq. km area of Chikhaldara and Dharni tehsils in Amravati district and Akot tehsil in Akola district in Maharashtra, India. Out of that 2200 sq. km. area is protected under Melghat Tiger Reserve (MTR) and it includes five protected areas under unified control. These protected areas are Gugamal National Park (*or the sanctum sanctorum*), Melghat Sanctuary (the buffer zone), Narnala Wildlife Sanctuary, Wan Wildlife Sanctuary and Ambabarwa Wildlife Sanctuary (Mahabal, 2005); (Fig. 1).



Fig: 1. : Melghat Tiger Reserve .

Melghat has southern tropical dry deciduous forest. It experiences tropical climate with temperatures ranging between 13° C and 22° C during winter and between 23° C to 45° C during summer. The annual rainfall ranges between 1000mm and 2250mm. A total of 715 plant species have been recorded from MTR (Mahabal, 2005 and Dhore & Joshi, 1998).

A total of 45 species of butterflies were recorded in Melghat region by Mahabal (2005). D'Abreu (1931) had studied the butterflies of the then Central Provinces (now Madhya Pradesh and Vidarbha) in general.

A survey of the butterfly diversity of the MTR was done during January 2005 to December 2007 to record the abundance, status and larval host plants of the species in the various parts of the MTR.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

Butterflies were observed, captured, identified and released immediately at the spot of capture. A butterfly net was used for this purpose. Many of the species were photographed in the wild. Dead butterflies killed on the roads by speeding vehicles were collected and identified using the available literature (Evans, 1932; Wynter-Blyth, 1957; Haribal, 1992 and Kunte, 2000). The dead specimens, many of them not in very good condition, were kept in butterfly collection boxes. Collecting live specimens was avoided during the study.

Butterflies were categorized into five groups based on their occurrence during the study period on the basis of frequency of sightings. Accordingly, those species found were categorized as:

VC- very common- seen on 80-100% of field visits

C- common- seen on 60-80% of field visits

NR- not rare / occasional - seen on 40-60% of field visits

R- rare - seen on 20-40% of field visits and

VR- very rare- seen on less than 20% of field visits

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS:

Overall 101 species of butterflies from total 08 families and 19 subfamilies were found during the study period. The family-wise occurrence of the species is: Papilionidae - 9.09% (number of species, n=9), Pieridae - 16.16% (n=16), Danaidae - 6.06% (n=6), Satyridae - 10.01% (n=10), Nymphalidae - 22.22% (n=22), Riodinidae - 01.01% (n=01), Lycaenidae - 23.23% (n=23) and Hesperiidae - 14.14% (n=14). It was found that 22 species of butterflies occurring are very common, 21 species are common, 16 species are not rare/ occasional, 21 species are rare, 17 species are very rare and 04 species are locally common in status. Lycaenidae dominated the family-wise abundance amongst the diverse taxa with a maximum of 23 species reported from the study area. (Table-1).

Total 101 host plants species of butterflies were recorded which are used by listed butterflies in the Melghat region. Out of these 07 plant species are cultivated in agriculture land or planted exotic plants species and 03 plant species were recorded from outside MTR. (Table 2).

Recorded host plants of *Pachliopta arstolochiae* F. (Common Rose) are *Aristolochia bracteolate, A. indica, A. tagala, A. griffithi, Thottea siliquosa* but these plants were not recorded from MTR. Listed host plants of *Sarangesa purendra* (Spotted small Flat) are *Blepharis asperrima* and *Asystalsia* spp but these plants were not recorded from MTR. Listed host plants of *Pachliopta hactor* L. (Crimson Rose) are *Aristolochia bracteolate, A. indica, Thottea siliquosa* but these plants were not recorded from MTR. *Danaus genutia* Cr. (Common Tiger) butterflies are common in MTR. More than 10 host plants have been recorded for *D. genutia* from MTR by the taxonomists.

Surprisingly it was found that many earlier reported host plant species (Kunte, 2000) of some butterflies are not found in the study area or have not been reported by taxonomists (Dhore & Joshi, 1988, Bhogaonkar & Devarkar, 1999). This suggests that either the butterfly species are using some other alternative host plants in MTR or these plants occur in the study area but were not reported earlier. Further study to find out the alternative host plants of these butterfly species from MTR is being done.

Hygrophila auriculata is most widely used by 10 species of butterflies in MTR, as well as the butterfly species *Catopsilia pyranthe* L., *Neptis hylas varmona* L. and *Parathyma perius* Linn. are using maximum variety of host plants.

The plant *Caesalpinia decapetala* (family Mimosaceae) was recorded as a new host plant of *Eurema brigitta rubella* W. Plant *Echinops echinatus* was recorded as a new host plant of *Cynthia cardui* L. (Painted Lady) and a small grass species, *Cynodon dactylon* was recorded as a new host plant of *Ypthima asterope mahratta* M (Common Three Ring). Extensive study on specific grasses and plants to record host plants of various butterfly species is needed.

Sr. No	Common Name	Scientific Name	Specific Area	Status		
-	Suborder : Rhopalocera					
I. Fa	I. Family : PAPILIONIDAE					
1. Sı	1. Subfamily : Papilioninae					
01	Common Mormon	Papilio polytes Cr.	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O	С		

Table -1. Checklist of butterflies from Melghat Tiger Reserve (MTR)

			F	
02	Lime Butterfly	Papilio demoleus L.	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O	VC
03	Common Rose	Pachliopta arstolochiae F.	F GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O	NR
05	Common Rose	Pachilopia arsiolochiae F.	F	INK
04	Crimson Rose	Pachliopta hactor L.	GNP,MS,OF	R
05	Malabar Rose	Pachliopta pandiyan M	MS	VR
06	Tailed Jay	Graphium Agamemnon L.	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O F	NR
07	Common Jay	Graphium doson Fd.	MS,OF	VR
08	Spot Swordtail	Graphium nomius Esp.	GNP,MS,WS,AS,OF	VC
09	Common Bluebottle	Graphium sarpedon L.	MS	VR
	amily : PIERIDAE ubfamily : Pierinae			
10	Common Jezebel	Delis eucharis Dry.	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O F	С
11	Common Gull	Cepora nerissa F.	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O F	NR
12	Pioneer	Anaphaeis aurota F.	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O F	VC
13	Common Albatross	Appis albina darada Fd.	MS	VR
14	Great Orange Tip	Hebomoea glaucippe L.	MS,NS,WS,AS,OF	R
15	White Orange Tip	Ixias Marianne Cr.	MS,NS,WS,AS,OF	NR
16	Yellow Orange Tip	Ixias pyrene L.	MS,WS,AS,OF	NR
17	Small Orange Tip	<i>Calotis etrida</i> Hub.	WS,AS,OF	VR
18	Common Wanderer	Pareronia valeria Cra.	GNP,MS,OF	R
2. St	ubfamily : Colladinae	•		
19	Lemon Emigrant	<i>Catopsilia crocale Pomona</i> F.	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O F	С
20	Mottled Emigrant	Catopsilia pyranthe L.	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O F	VC
21	African Emigrant	Catopsilia pyranthe florella	GNP,MS	С
22	Small Grass Yellow	<i>Eurema brigitta rubella</i> Wallace	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O F	VC
23	Common Grass Yellow	Eurema hecabe L.	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O F	VC
24	Spotless Grass Yellow	<i>Eurema laeta</i> Bdv.	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O F	С
25	Threespot Grass Yellow	<i>Eurema blanda silhetana</i> Wallace	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O F	NR
	Family : DANAIDAE ubfamily : Danainae			
26	Plain Tiger	Danaus chrysippus L.	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O F	VC
27	Striped Tiger	Danaus genutia Cr.	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O F	С
28	Blue Tiger	Tirumala limniace	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O	С

			F	
29	Dark Blue Tiger	Tirumala Septentrionis	GNP,MS	R
30	Glassy Tiger	Parantica aglea	MS	VR
2. S	ubfamily : Euploeinae			•
31	Common Indian Crow	Euploea core Cr.	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O F	VC
	Family : SATYRIDAE ubfamily : Satyrinae			
32	Comm. Evening Brown	Melanitis leda ismeme Cr.	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O F	VC
33	Dark Evening Brown	Melanitis phedima Stoll.	GNP,MS	NR
34	Common Bushbrown	Mycalesis perseus F.	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O F	VC
35	Darkbrand Bushbrown	Mycalesis mineus L.	MS	VR
36	Tamil Bush Browm	Mycalesis Visala subdita M.	GNP,MS	R
37	Common Tree Brown	Lethe rohria F.	GNP,MS,AS,OF	С
38	Bamboo Tree Brown	Lethe europa F.	GNP,MS,WS,OF	С
39	Banded Tree Brown	Lethe confusa Aurivill	GNP,MS	VR
40	Common Three Ring	Ypthima asterope mahratta M	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS	C
41	Common Four Ring	Ypthima ceylonica huebneri Kirby.	MS	VR
	Samily : NYMPHALID	AE		
1. 5 42	ubfamily : Biblidinae	Byblia ilithyia Dry.	GNP,MS,WS,AS,OF	NR
43	Common Castor	Ariadne merione Cr.	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O F	LC
44	Angled Castor	Ariadne ariadne L.	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O F	R
2. S	ubfamily : Agrynninae			
45	Common Leopard	Phalanta phalantha Dry.	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O F	VC
3. S	ubfamily : Nymphalina	e		
46	Painted Lady	Cynthia cardui L.	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O F	C
47	Lemon Pansy	Junonia lemonias L.	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O F	VC
48	Yellow Pansy	Junonia hierta F.	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O F	С
49	Blue Pansy	Junonia orithya L.	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O F	VC
50	Grey Pansy	Junonia atlited L.	MS,WS,AS	R
51	Peacock Pansy	Junonia almanac L.	GNP,MS,NS,WS	LC
52	Chocolate Pansy	Precis iphita Cr.	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O F	VC
53	Danaid Eggfly	Hypolamnas misippus L.	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O F	С

54	Great Eggfly	Hypolamnas bolina L.	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O F	VC	
4. S	ubfamily : Limenitidina	ae			
55	Baronet	Euthalia nais Forst	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O F	C	
56	Baron	Euthalia aconthea Cr.	GNP, MS	LC	
57	Commander	Moduza procris procris Cr.	GNP,MS,OF	NR	
58	Common Sailer	Neptis hylas varmona L.	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O F	VC	
59	Common Sergeant	Parathyma perius Linn	GNP,MS, OF	VR	
60	Staff Sergeant	Athyma selenophora Koll	MS,OF	VR	
5. S	ubfamily : Charaxinae	· · · ·			
61	Common Nawab	Polyura athamas Dry	MS,NS,WS,AS,OF	VR	
62	Black Rajah	Charaxes fabius F.	GNP,MS,WS, AS	R	
6. S	ubfamily : Acraeinae	J	, , ,		
63	Tawny Coster	Acraea violae F.	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O F	VC	
	Family : RIODINIDAE	2	1 -		
64	Plum Judy	Abisara echerius Stoll.	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS	С	
	Family : LYCAENID		5111,110,110,110,110,110		
	ubfamily : Polyommati				
65	Tiny Grass Blue	Zizula hylax F.	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS	С	
66	Grass Jewel	<i>Freyeria trochylus</i> Freyer	MS,NS,WS,AS	C	
67	Lesser Grass Blue	Zizinia otis F.	MS,NS,WS,AS	R	
68	Dark Grass Blue	Zizeeria karsandra M.	MS,NS,WS,AS	R	
<u>69</u>	Pale Grass Blue	Pseudozizeeria maha K.	MS,NS,WS,AS,OF	VR	
70	African Babul Blue	Azanus jesous (Guerin)	MS, OF	R	
71	Common Hedge Blue	Calastrina puspa Moore	MS, OF	R	
72	Gram Blue	Euchrysops cnejus F.	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O F	VC	
73	Pea Blue	Lampides boeticus Linn	MS,NS,WS,AS,OF	NR	
74	Lime blue	Chilades laius Cr.	MS, OF	R	
75	Plains Cupid	Chilades pandava	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS	VC	
76	Small Cupid	Chilades parrhasius	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O F	C	
77	Common Caerulean	Jamides celeno Cr.	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O F	R	
78	Zebra Blue	Leptotes plinius Fab.	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O F	VC	
79	Rounded Pierrot	Tarucus nara Kollar	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O F	VC	
80	Dark Pierrot	Taracus ananda DeN	MS,WS,AS	R	
81	Forget -me-not	Catochrysops strabo	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS	NR	
82	Common Lineblue	Prosotas nora C & R Felder	MS, WS, AS	R	
2. S	ubfamily : Aphnaeinae		J	1	
83	Common Silverline	Spindasis vulcanus F.	MS,OF	R	
3. Subfamily : Theclinae					

84	Slate Flash	Rapala manera H.	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O F	NR
85	Indian Red Flash	Rapala jarbus Fab. MS		R
86	Western Centaur	Nilasera psudocentaurus	MS	VR
	Oakblue	1		
87	Large Oakblue	Arhopala amantes Hew	GNP	NR
B. S	uborder : Grypocera			
	I. Family : HESPERIID	DAE		
1. S	ubfamily : Coeliadinae			
88	Brown Awl	Badamia exclamationis	GNP,MS,OF	NR
89	Common Banded	Hasora chromus Car	MS,NS,WS,AS,OF	LC
	Awl			
	ubfamily : Pyrginae			0
90	Spotted Small Flat	Sarangesa purendra M.	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O	C
			F	
91	Common Spotted Flat	<i>Celaenorrhinus leucocera</i> Koll.	GNP,MS,OF	NR
92	Indian Skipper	Spialia galba F.	GNP,MS	VR
93	Tricolor Pied Flat	<i>Pseudocoladenia indrani</i> Moore	MS	R
94	Golden Angle	<i>Odontoptilum ransonnetti</i> C & R Felder	GNP,MS	С
3. S	ubfamily : Hesperiinae			
95	Chestnut Bob	Lambrix salsala M.	GNP,MS,NS	R
96	Vindhyan Bob	Arnetta vindhiana Moore	GNP,MS	VR
97	Bush Hopper	Ampitita dioscorides Fab	GNP,MS	R
98	Rice Swift	Borbo cinnara Wallace	GNP,MS,NS,WS,AS,O F	VC
99	Grass Demon	Udaspes folus Cr.	GNP,MS,WS	С
10	Common Dartlet	Oriens gola Moore	MS	VR
0		_		
10	Small Branded Swift	Pelopidas mathias mathias	GNP,MS	NR
1				

Abbreviations used for the specific areas of the MTR where the butterflies were found are:

MTR – Melghat Tiger Reserve, MS- Melghat Sanctuary, GNP-Gugamal National Park, NS- Narnala Wildlife Sanctuary, WS-Wan Sanctuary, AS-Ambabarwa Sanctuary and

Abbreviations Used for Status:

Very Common - VC, Common - C, Not Rare - NR, Rare - R, Very Rare - VR, Locally Common - LC

Sr. No.	Host plant species	Used by butterfly spp.	Observations/remarks
01	Abelmoschus spp.	54	
02	Abutilon spp.	54	
03	Acacia caesia	61	
04	Acacia pennata	61,84	
05	Acacia Spp.	72,75,76,81	10 spp. in MTR
06	Acacia tora	84	
07	Achyranthes aspera	93,94	
08	Adina cordifolia	60	Large tree, common in MTR
09	Aegle marmelos	1, 2,	Frequently used all over MTR
10	Albizia lebbek	78	· ·
11	Anacardium occidentale	56	
12	Anona squamosa	1, 6,	
13	Apluda mutica	33,37	Grass, in MTR
14	Apulda spp.	33	Grass
15	Bambusa arundinaceae	38,95	Record of specific grass needed.
16	Barleria cristata	53,54	
17	Barleria Spp.	47,48,49,50,	3 spp. in MTR
		51,52	
18	Bryonia palmate	56	
19	Buhainia recemosa	19,20,21	
20	Butea frondosa	19,20,21	
21	Butea monosperma	72,73,75,76, 77	
22	Cadaba indica	83	Plant found outside MTR
23	<i>Caesalpinia decapetala</i> Fam: Mimosaceae	22	Recorded as a new host plant of <i>Eurema brigitta rubella</i> W. in MTR
24	Calotropis gigantea	26,28,29,30	
25	Capillipedium Spp.	39	3 spp. found in MTR
26	Capparis grandis	14,15,16,17	Outside MTR
27	Capparis zeylanica	11,12,14,15, 18	Outside MTR
28	Carvia callosa	52,91	Common plant all over MTR
29	Cassia occidentalis	19,20,21	Frequently used by Catopsilia
30	Cassia fistula	19,20,21,25	pyranthe (Mottled Emigrant)
31	Cassia siamea	19,20,21	
32	Cassia tora	19,20,21	
33	Citrus Spp.	2,	In cultivation around MTR
34	Corchorus spp.	58,59	5 spp. in MTR
35	Crotalaria spp.	73	
36	Cryptolepis buchanani	26,31	Frequently used all over MTR
37	Curcuma aromatica	99	
38	Curcuma dicipiens	99	
39	Curcuma pseudomontana	99	
40	Cymbopogon martini	98	Common grass in some areas
41	Cynodon dactylon	40	Recorded as a new host plant.

Table - 2. List of host plants of butterflies recorded from MT	Γ R.
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42	Delonix regia	61	Cultivated exotic plant.
43	Dendrophthoe falcate	10	
44	Diospyros melanoxylon	55	
45	Diplocyclos palmatus	56	
46	Dregea volubilis	28	
47	Echinops echinatus	46	Recorded as a new host plant
48	Embellia spp	64	
49	Ficus racemosa	31	
50	Ficus religosa	31	
50	Flacourtia indica	45	
52	Flacourtia Montana	45	
53	Flemingia spp.	58,59	2 spp. in MTR
54	Glochidion velutinum	59	
55	Gnaphalium luteo	46	
56	Gnaphalium tuleo Gnaphalium pulvinatum	46	
57	Grasses	34,36,37,40	Specific grass record peeded
57			Specific grass record needed 6 spp. in MTR
58 59	Grewia sp. Helicteres isora	58,59,61 58,59	o spp. iii wi i K
		31	
60 61	Hemidesmus indicus		
01	Hygrophila auriculata	47,48,49,50,	
		52,65,66,67,	
62	Insticia procumbors	68,69 52	
62 63	Justicia procumbens	-	
	Lantana camera	66,67,68,69 56	
64 65	Mangifera indica Michelia champaca		Cultivated plant.
66	Milius tomentosum	2,6,7,	Cunivaled plant.
67		6,7,8,9 57	
	Mitragyna parvifolia		
68	Mucuna purpurea	58,59	
69 70	Murraya koenigii	1	
	Oplismenus compositus	32,33	Caltierte derlant
71	Orizya sativa	32,33,98	Cultivated plant.
72	Ougeinia oojensis	72,75,76,81	
73	Panicum spp.	32,33	4 spp in MTR, 3 wild
74	Passiflora foetida	63	Common climber, found around
75	Demois store al	0.0	villages, recorded outside MTR
75	Pennisetum alopeucuros	98	
76	Plumbago zeylanica	78	
77	Polyalthia longifolia	6,7,9,	Cultivated around rest houses & schools
78	Pongamia pinnata	77,89	Common in MTR along streams.
79	Portulaca oleracea	54	4 spp. in MTR
80	Psorela corylifolia	2,	Mostly used by <i>Papilio demoleus</i> L
81	Richinus communis	43,44,89	More plant sp. search required.
82	Schleichera oleosa	86	Found in Raipur range and N. P. of MTR
83	Sesbania bispinosa	78	
05	Sesounia dispinosa	,0	

84	Sida rhombifolia	47,48,49,52,	
		53,54,92	
85	Sorghum spp.	32,33	4 spp in MTR, 3 wild
86	Strobilanthes spp.	66,67,68,69	1 sp. found in MTR
87	Tamarindus indicus	62	
88	Terminalia alata	86,87	
89	Terminalia bellirica	88	
90	Tragia cannabina	42	Both Tragia sp. recorded outside
			MTR
91	Tragia Plukenetii	42	Recorded as a new host plant
92	Tricholepis amplexicaulis	46	
93	Vigna trilobata	72,75,76,81	
94	Vigna unguiculata	58,59	Cultivated plant.
95	Waltheria indica	92	
96	Zea mays	32,33	Cultivated plant.
97	Zingiber nimmonii	99	
98	Ziziphus mauritiana	79,80,83	
99	Ziziphus rugosa	79,80,83	
100	Ziziphus spp.	84	
101	Zornia gibbosa	46	

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