



## Butterflies



Papilionidae

Papilionidae

Pieridae



## Butterflies

# Tamil Nadu Forest Department

## BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS of KALAKAD MUNDANTHURAI TIGER RESERVE

Butterflies and Moths are insects that belong to the Order Lepidoptera. Those who study them are called Lepidopterists. These insects have a body which is divided into head, thorax and abdomen. Two pairs of wings and three pairs of jointed legs are attached to the thorax. The word 'Lepidoptera' means 'Scaly Winged' describing their wings which are covered with overlapping scales. These scales are responsible for the colours & patterns we see. They lay eggs, which hatch into larvae, grow to become caterpillars, then pupae and finally emerge from pupae as adult butterflies or moths. Butterflies are considered to be the most attractive and colorful amongst insects. The attractive colours, designs and styles shown by Moths are rarely acknowledged.

How do we recognize Butterflies and Moths? Here are some hints for beginners. Remember that there are many exceptions to the brief hints given here, but you could begin with these features and photos to identify them.

The antennae of most butterflies are knob or club shaped. A long proboscis for drinking nectar is kept coiled on the underside of their head. The body is more slender and less hairy when compared with moths. Wings are generally kept folded at rest. In Family Nymphalidae (Brush footed butterflies), the forelegs are reduced and small. All the legs of those in Family Pieridae (or Whites and Yellows) are similar and end in a bifid

or toothed claw. Most of the Butterflies of Family Papilionidae (or Swallow tails) have a tail projecting from their hind wings (there are a few exceptions). Butterflies of Family Lycaenidae (or Blues) are generally small with lines, dots and/or with small tails on the wings. The Hesperiidae (or Skippers) are also small but have hooked antennae, unlike butterflies of the other four families that have club shaped ones.

In addition to the above features, the patterns and colorations seen on the upper and underside of their wings and to a small extent the body, would also help to identify them.

Moths outnumber butterfly in diversity. Worldwide, there are close to 200,000 species of Lepidoptera of which only 15,000 species are butterflies, the rest (185,000 sp) being moths. Butterflies are the more loved ones; moths generally disliked or feared, rarely studied except by agricultural scientists. Hence many hundreds of species remain undiscovered.

A Moth's body is more hairy and stout than those of the butterflies'. Moths sit with their wings open, held over their body like a roof, but there are exceptions to this. The males of many moths sport a feathery antenna which is a feature used to distinguish them from Butterflies. But it is incorrect to say that all moths have a feathery antenna for moths show a wide range of styles in their antennae. Moths generally come to light at night, but there are several species of day flying moths too. Unlike butterflies a large number moth species do not feed as adults, eating only when they are caterpillars. Some, like the hawk moths which feed, are responsible for pollinating night-blooming flowers. They are also important food source for bats and other insects. Moths are colourful and sport patterns that would be the envy of any fashion designer.

The life cycle of moths and butterflies are similar, going through the stages of eggs, caterpillars, pupae to adult. Moths overcome unfavourable conditions by remaining as pupae for long periods.

Butterflies and Moths that may be seen easily in the forests of KMTR are shown here.

## Moths



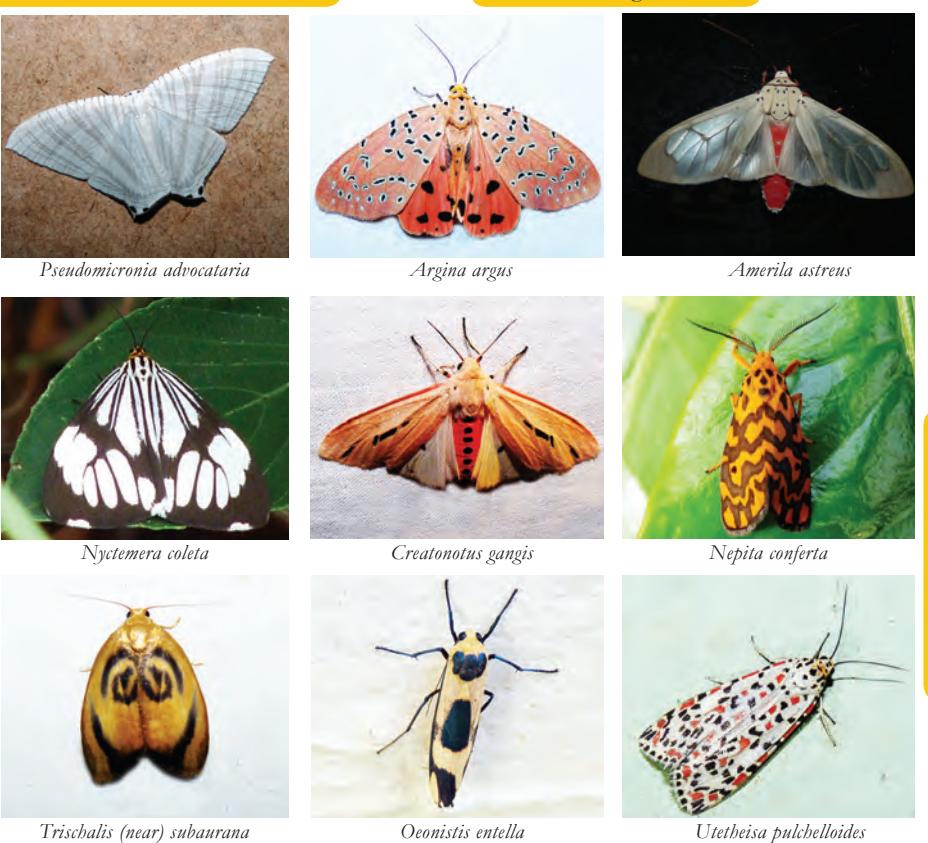
Geometridae - Geometer moths



Uraniidae - Swallowtail moths



Arctiinae - Tiger Moths



Arctiinae - Tiger Moths