



Big Butterfly Month: India 2020

It would be the first of its kind event where butterfly experts, enthusiasts and organizations across India are joining hands for a month-long event.

Mumbai, August 19: For the first time in India, more than 25 organizations working in the field of biodiversity and its conservation have come together towards the common goal of involving citizens in large scale monitoring programs. The aim of the **Big Butterfly Month: India 2020** is to sensitize the citizens of the country and bring them together under the umbrella of butterfly lovers to preserve the current habitat and to build new habitats for butterflies. The celebrations would be held over a period of two weeks from 5th to 20th September 2020 and some of the competitions and outreach activities would include Butterfly Gardening, online workshops on Butterfly Photography & Videography, Journaling, Butterfly Quiz and understanding its Lifecycle. The *Big Butterfly Count* would be held on an all-India level from 14th to 20th September 2020 where all participants are encouraged to log in their submissions into the citizen science digital platforms: Butterflies of India, iNaturalist, and India Biodiversity Portal.

The programs shall be conducted in all the major cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Dehradun, Ahmedabad, Guwahati, Jammu, and Chennai, and there are plans to reach out to protected areas around central India, Himalaya and the northeastern states of our country. In the process, diverse ecosystems may get improved as havens for our native biodiversity, which is the need of the hour. The popularity and scope of citizen science appears almost limitless. For citizens, the motivation is to contribute to science, public information and conservation with their strength in numbers, unmatched enthusiasm and a broad geographic spread. Scientists, on their part, offer a systematic way to collect information in a strong scientific framework and on a scale that would otherwise not be possible.

Prof. Krushnamegh Kunte of NCBS says, “New information and large datasets are powerful not only in advancing our scientific understanding of the biology of butterflies, but also in planning conservation action so that we are able to perpetuate India’s legacy of unparalleled biodiversity. Our combined efforts so far to survey butterflies in India’s biodiversity hotspots and to monitor butterfly populations in areas of Bengaluru and Delhi need to be scaled up across India. Along with this, outreach initiatives such as the Big Butterfly Month will produce a citizenry well-educated in the matters of nature and the environment who, we hope, will work towards protecting and creating butterfly habitats. I believe that the large network that has been forged for this initiative will make it a path-breaking national mission.

Sohail Madan from BNHS says, “The observation and submission of data on digital platforms is imperative in the age that we live in and it's high time we harness this power for conservation work in India. With this specific idea in mind, we are organizing the Big Butterfly Month, so that we may be able to bridge this gap between knowledge and implementation and provide the participants with a platform from where they can learn about butterflies, their behavior, habitat and conservation approaches.” Butterflies play a vital role in the ecosystem. They act as a food source for various other organisms such as spiders, wasps, dragonflies, birds, lizards and help in plant pollination. For us, they act as indicators of the health of the environment and ecosystems and therefore, studying butterflies is important to understand our surroundings.

--Divyashree Rai
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