



CREATION OF A MICROHABITAT FOR BUTTERFLIES

India

Monitoring biodiversity depends upon “indicators”. With a short life cycle and high sensitivity to climate and environmental change, butterflies lend themselves as ideal biodiversity indicators.

'Creation of a Microhabitat for Butterflies', aims at sustaining the biodiversity of the university campus by creating a micro-habitat for butterflies. They believe that by establishing a butterfly garden, it is possible to gain insight into the behavior and role of butterflies in sustaining natural ecosystems. Such micro-habitats can be set up by introducing the butterfly host plants and by recreating suitable habitats.

Following are a list of activities included in their project:

1. Site selection: They ensure that the proposed site has adequate amount of direct morning sunlight for six hours which will not only allow the plants to bloom but also allow butterflies to warm up; Large rocks, exposed soil, or even pavement are all surfaces that will warm up in morning sunlight.
2. The site is equally sheltered by trees and shrubs to protect the butterflies from direct wind currents as they try to feed, mate and lay eggs. Additionally, trees and shrubs give valuable shelter where butterflies can roost at night or hide from predators.
3. Proper puddling stations were placed at various places in the garden, which will provide the butterflies with additional salts and minerals to replenish their sodium levels, apart from water.
4. After the preparation of soil, team members started collecting data regarding the larval and nectar plants to be sown. They planted around 40 species of plants. After the garden was established, butterfly feeders and homes were constructed by the team members to attract and provide shelter to the butterflies.
5. A survey was conducted to monitor the existing butterfly species and to document them by photographing them. They have identified around 50 species of butterflies in the garden. This was achieved by establishing a transect (walk) to monitor the butterfly.
6. A book is being designed to document the butterflies on their campus and will be used to continue to spread awareness about butterflies and educate students about the importance of these

The team identified a site which had adequate sunlight and shade needed for creating the microhabitat. Along with the plantation they designed a book, documenting the butterflies visiting the habitat and also planned an exhibition displaying the photographs of the butterflies.

The team planted both the larval and nectar plants so as to provide food and shelter for all the four stages in the life cycle of a butterfly i.e., egg stage, larval stage, pupa stage and the final butterfly stage.



Team Members

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species, and help understand insect migration. They have completed the layout design and structure.

7. The team's efforts featured in The Hindu on October 24th 2014.
8. They held a discussion with in their college, addressing about 60-70 students, about the significance of their project.
9. The team presented their project in the monthly meet held by the Madras Naturalists' Society to a gathering of about fifteen people. The Madras Naturalists' Society, MNS, was formed by a group of naturalists` in 1978, and has done significant work in the field of nature conservation. Its main aim is creating awareness among the general public in nature and environmental conservation. They have regular meetings every month and publish monthly newsletter and a quarterly journal called Blackbuck. They also organize outings and camps for members.

