

## FOREWORD

This book on butterflies of Kerala is long overdue. Dr. George Mathew's effort in bringing out this guide for the public is very welcome. It complements his pioneering efforts in establishing a live butterfly garden, first at the Kerala Forest Research Institute campus at Peechi, and then promoting establishment of similar gardens in several places in Kerala and elsewhere. His love of butterflies has now produced an excellent guidebook on butterflies of Kerala, with the magnanimous contribution of exquisite photographs made as a hobby by three medical professionals. The book presents the photograph, brief description, and information on the distribution range, hosts, and the present survival status of over 200 species of the 330 and odd species of butterflies known from Kerala. This will serve as an invaluable guide to both amateurs and professionals. I understand that all the species could not be included because photographs were not available. I hope a second edition including all the species will appear soon.

There are about 20,000 species of butterflies in the world, of which 1500 occur in India. With its rich plant diversity, the Western Ghats is the home for about 350 species of butterflies, of which 36 are endemic, that is, they originated in the Western Ghats and are found nowhere else.

With increasing urbanization, habitat modification and destruction are progressing steadily and as a consequence, many species are becoming extinct. Butterfly diversity is a reflection of the total biodiversity of an area. Each species has its own unique ecological requirements and since we have not understood all these inter-relationships we cannot ensure their sustenance. Therefore we should aim at conservation of natural landscapes as much as possible, in order to ensure the survival of valuable species. I hope this book will kindle interest among the public to know their companion butterflies and encourage them to take actions favourable to conservation of nature. I also hope that this book will promote butterfly watching as a hobby.

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