



HERITAGE

# A flutter of Sri Lanka's Butterflies

Published 21 hours ago on December 22, 2018 By editor

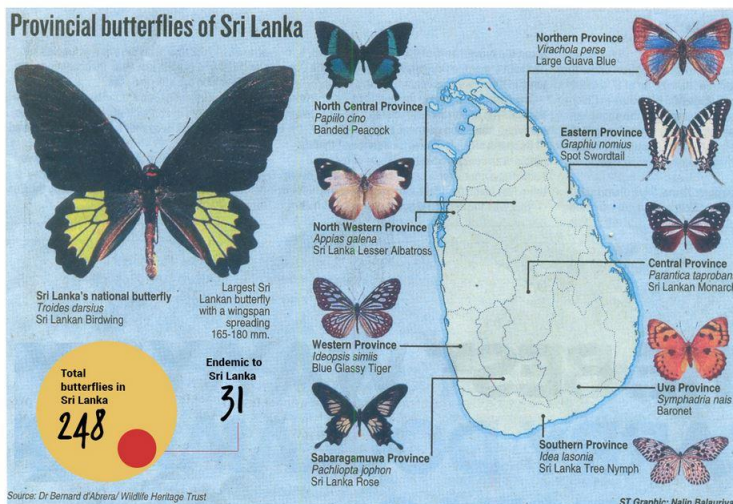
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Sri Lanka's butterflies are as much part of the intriguing natural heritage of this country as elephants and leopards, but they are not a tourist attraction. At least, up until now. If their fame spreads it will be due to the efforts of Dr George Michael and Nancy van der Poorten, two renowned Sri Lankan lepidopterists. Following the publication of their hardback publication, "The Butterfly Fauna of Sri Lanka" in 2016, they have published an easy-to-carry "Field Guide to the Butterflies of Sri Lanka."

The book itself is a pleasure to hold and look at. Although it has a soft-cover, the 250 pages are glossy, enabling the photographs of every single species of Sri Lanka's butterflies to be seen clearly. Despite this island's small size, there are 248 species of butterflies here, of which 31 are endemic. The authors state: "The butterfly fauna of the island is similar to that of peninsula India," before recounting how butterflies arrived here.

## Sri Lanka's Butterfly zones

There are four major climatic zone of the country – wet, intermediate, dry and arid – largely defined by rainfall and elevation. The authors begin by detailing the various species to be found in the zones and then recommend where butterfly viewing is best according to the time of the year. We learn that "most species of butterfly are active from about 9am to 2pm which allows them to avoid birds that forage in the early morning and late afternoon."



## Conservation of Sri Lanka's Butterflies

Before identifying the various species, this book defines the anatomy and life cycle of a butterfly, and stresses the importance of conservation, explaining why the butterfly is a vitally important part of the natural world. This is especially so in Sri Lanka where the landscape is changing rapidly because of human intervention, which causes destruction to butterfly habitats. To help, the authors suggest creating a butterfly garden by careful planting and avoiding excessive clean-up as some species of butterfly pupate under leaf litter.

The main appeal of this book is not just in educating the layman about Sri Lanka's butterflies and how to appreciate them, but mainly through its guide to identifying them accompanying every photograph. Each butterfly is described with key information on its appearance, behaviour, habitat, flight period and prime locations for observation.

Every one of these butterflies looks exquisite, colourful and dainty from the Crimson Tip to the Common Banded Peacock, the Painted Sawtooth to the Large Guava Blue. The book, like the Sri Lankan butterflies it honours, is a work of art.



### Sri Lanka Holiday Guru's Tip

All Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths) in Sri Lanka are protected; even the use of a net for the purpose of identification and release is illegal without prior permission from the Department of Wildlife Conservation. So don't try to catch any, just use this splendid book with its amazing photography for reference. It's available overseas through Leopodon Books, Toronto, Canada; [www.lepodonbooks.com](http://www.lepodonbooks.com) or in Sri Lanka at Rs4,500.