During my field data collection on Human-Elephant conflict project of WWF-India, I have visited many places by tracking elephants in the O’Valley area of Gudalur forest division of The Nilgiris district. On 4th May 2014 I observed a large fast flying butterfly around Bishop Wood (Bischofia javanica) tree top. Later I confirmed the species identity with the help of experts as the Blue Nawab (Polyura screiber, Godart, 1824).

It is one of the most beautiful butterfly of the family Nymphalidae (Brush-footed butterflies). Polyura screiber measuring 90-100 mm in wing span is a dark brown butterfly with a broadly blue edged, white discal band on the upper side of the wing. Its extremely powerful wings help them remain almost exclusively among the tree tops in tall, thick jungle (Wynter-Blyth, 1957).

The place was a patch of evergreen forest with encroached human settlements within 25m. It was near a small stream with location latitude N11.45577 and long E 076.48900. Earlier sighting reports of this species were also in evergreen forests, during the months of March to May in the south India, around flowering trees, streams and animal droppings (Kehimkar, 2008). Plants such as Moullava spicata, Rourea sanataloides (Connaraceae) and Wagatea spicata (Leguminosae) were reported as larval host plants of Blue Nawab (Mathew, 2011). This butterfly is distributed in Bangladesh, Myanmar and India (Kehimkar, 2008). In India, it is reported from North Kanara, Coorg, The Nilgiris, the Nadgani Ghat, Sholayar and Travancore (Mathew, 2011). This species is protected under Scheduled I of Indian Wildlife Protection Act 1972.

The presence of this species in the last remaining forest patches indicates the importance of these habitats for rare species. Further investigations involving species inventory surveys and host plant abundance evaluations will help in long term conservation planning for such species.

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References

Fig 1. Blue Nawab (Polyura screiber) flying around Bishop wood tree (Bischofia javanica).