endangered species by the IUCN because of its restricted range and habitat loss. Its global population is confined to the Nilgiri Hills, Tamil Nadu, India.

Among the 31 fruit-eating bird species in the shola forests, the Nilgiri Laughingthrush contributed majority of the fruit foraging visits. It also visited a large number of tree species (37 species: 79%) in the shola forests which also included several endemics. Of the 26 plant families studied, 21 were benefited by Nilgiri Laughingthrush. An analysis of avian frugivore visits to endemic trees indicates that the Nilgiri Laughingthrush is the predominant visitor to endemic trees and probably a major seed disperser. For endemic species such as *Isonandra perrottetiana*, and *Glochidion neltgherrense*, Laughingthrush is the predominant visitor. Owing to its predominant role in seed dispersal of shola forest plants, the Nilgiri Laughingthrush is considered as a 'pivotal' seed disperser of the shola forests.

**Conservation of Sholas**

Invasive introduced species are a serious threat to this high altitude ecosystem. Species such as *Acacia mearnsii* and *Eucalyptus globulus* are the consequence of commercial plantation by the pre-independence regime. Other threatening invasive species in the shola biome include *Lantana camara*, *Solamum erianthum*, *Eupatorium glandulosum*, and *Cassia montana*. The invasion of exotic species poses stiff competition to the growth and survival of native species of this unique high altitude shola ecosystem. Mechanical removal of *Lantana* and *Solamum* on an annual basis would form an ideal option to control their further spread. Restoration of native vegetation in the wattle plantation areas is another option that would enhance the biodiversity in the shola-grassland biome.

Our recommendations with regard to bird-dispersed tree species for afforestation of sholas have been included in the Tamil Nadu Forest Department’s working plan for further action which is a success story of researcher-manager interaction.

P. Balasubramanian & C. Anbarasu; balusacon@yahoo.com

---

**Butterflies Ringing Yellow Bells**

I first saw hundreds of butterflies fluttering their wings and moving restlessly on a yellow flowered shrub on a Saturday afternoon while walking towards the canteen of SACON. While coming back, I stopped at the shrub for a while just to observe the number of species that are feeding on the plant. With my poor identification skills, I could still count more than ten species feeding on the nectar of the plant. Almost all of them were big sized such as crows and tigers. The possible explanation could be that the big sized butterflies would have long proboscis which can reach up to the nectar source. The congregation of the winged beauties amazed me and I decided to take photos of some of them.

Before going for the photographic expedition, it was needed for me to know the name of the plant, which I found out to be Yellow Bells *Tecoma stans* (L.) Juss. ex Kunth. The common name itself suggests the shape, size, color and orientation of flowers. This shrub is a native of America, introduced to India, possibly for aesthetic purpose.

There are few Tecoma shrubs in SACON campus, all of which are almost always flooded by Purple-rumped and Purple Sunbirds. A recent study [Dhanya R, P A Azeez, K Sakthidas and A Das (2013). Floral visits and floral damages by avian nectar robbers on an exotic shrub, Tecoma stans (L.) Kunth, in the Western Ghats, India. *Tropical Natural History* 13(1): 49-52] showed that these birds take nectar making a hole at the base of flower, a demonstration of plant-pollinator mutualism. I also saw plenty of butterflies nectaring on flowers; took photographs at three sites – behind SACON main office, in front of library block and around laboratory block. I could observe Common Crow, Common Mormon, Blue Mormon, Blue Tiger, Glassy Tiger, Plain Tiger, Striped Tiger, Lime, Great Crimson-Tip, Emigrant, Brown Awl, Common Rose, Common Jezebel, Tailed Jay, Common Emigrant, Danaid Eggfly and the Giant Southern Birdwing. As these were more of casual recordings, I might have missed a lot of species as well. Along with the butterflies were honey bees and solitary hummingbird moths. The butterflies were typically approaching flowers fluttering their wings continuously so as to be in flight until and unless they find a suitable nectar source. They were landing on the flower, resting their body for a second or two, and peep inside the long receptacle of the flower to reach to nectar. It was funny to see how Brown Awls with their small bodies were managing to do the same. Interestingly the holes in the flowers created by sunbirds were used by small sized butterflies to reach the nectar, which otherwise is impossible with their short proboscis and/or body size. The Brown Awls were at an advantage as they could suck the nectar from the holes as well as from the flower mouth by entering the flower. However, it is risky at the same time. I saw a freshly killed Brown Awl by a Crab Spider, holding its prey firmly from inside the flower. I also observed few species using the shrub as a roosting site. I kept thinking why a single shrub species is attracting so many species? Not because this is the only flowering shrub in the campus; there are others as well. May be because of its bright yellow color, but then there are *Casia spp.* and *Cesalpinia spp.* May be it has got rich nectar. May be butterflies like it! I kept wondering, until it was quarter to two in the afternoon. A churning sound came from my stomach and I thought it’s time to ingest something. I was convinced that these Tecomas wouldn’t stop offering whatever they have, even if it is finished.

The small shrub looked like a temple and the butterflies as devotees, ringing the yellow bells.

**Pankaj Koparde, pankajkoparde@gmail.com**

**Sighting of an unusual breeding site of Little Egrets at Palakkad.**

We recorded a rather unusual and strange nesting site of Little Egrets near Puthupariyaram (10° 48’ 23.2” N and 76° 37” 9.4” E) on National Highway 203 at 2 km from Palakkad Junction Railway flyover. The site was strange for two