

Butterflies of Upper Seletar Reservoir – Unfazed by Haze

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by Simon Chan

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Despite the hazy and cloudy skies on the morning of 15th September, 10 enthusiastic butterfly watchers explored the forested trails of Upper Seletar Reservoir (USR).



Resilient butterfly watchers eager to explore Upper Seletar Reservoir

Right from the start, we were pleasantly surprised with a rare find – a skipper called the Tree Flitter (*Hyarotis adrastus praba*). This deep forest denizen was busy feeding on the nectar of the Jasmine flower oblivious to our focused stares and paparazzi-like camera flashes. Next, a couple of Pale Mottles (*Logania marmorata damis*) and a Biggs' Brownwing (*Miletus biggsii biggsii*) caught our attention. Dull though they appeared in their coloration, we remained captivated as we had lowered our expectations and hopes to chance upon these exciting encounters due to the inclement air quality. We then spotted a large, brown, slow-flapping butterfly struggling to keep itself airborne. It turned out to be another rare find – a female Cruiser (*Vindula dejone*)

erotella). Though she had almost perfect wings, she looked a tad worn out and faded, perhaps due to the rigours of egg-laying. While dragonflies near a stream distracted some of us, a tiny Elbowed Pierrot (*Caleta elna elvira*) did a flighty dance entertaining the rest of our group.



Clockwise from top right: Tree Flitter, Cruiser (female), Pale Mottle.

At the exit of the overgrown first trail, we caught glimpses of small butterflies from the Satyrinae subfamily. These included the Common Four-Rings (*Ypthima huebneri*), Malayan Five-Rings (*Ypthima horsfieldii humei*) and the many similar looking Bush Browns (*Mycalesis* etc.).

The butterfly activity was noticeably much lesser as we entered the second trail. It was only at the 90-degree bend that we spotted the handsome Knight (*Lebadea martha parkeri*) and a male Archduke (*Lexias pardalis dirteana*).



A Horsfield's Baron resting on a leaf.

Venturing outside the trail, we chanced upon a co-operative male Horsfield's Baron (*Tanaecia iapis puseda*) which was patrolling the green area parallel to the road. We then followed a fast-flying Blue Jay (*Graphium evemon eventus*) on its way to a row of Ixora bushes. The

greenery behind the road's roundabout produced a Great Helen (*Papilio iswara iswara*), two Common Mormons (*Papilio polytes romulus*), Chocolate Pansies (*Junonia hedonia ida*) and a Common Posy (*Drupadia ravindra moorei*).

On our return trip bypassing the aforementioned Ixora bushes, we were blessed with the presence of a friendly though battle weary-looking Red Edge (*Semanga superba deliciosa*).



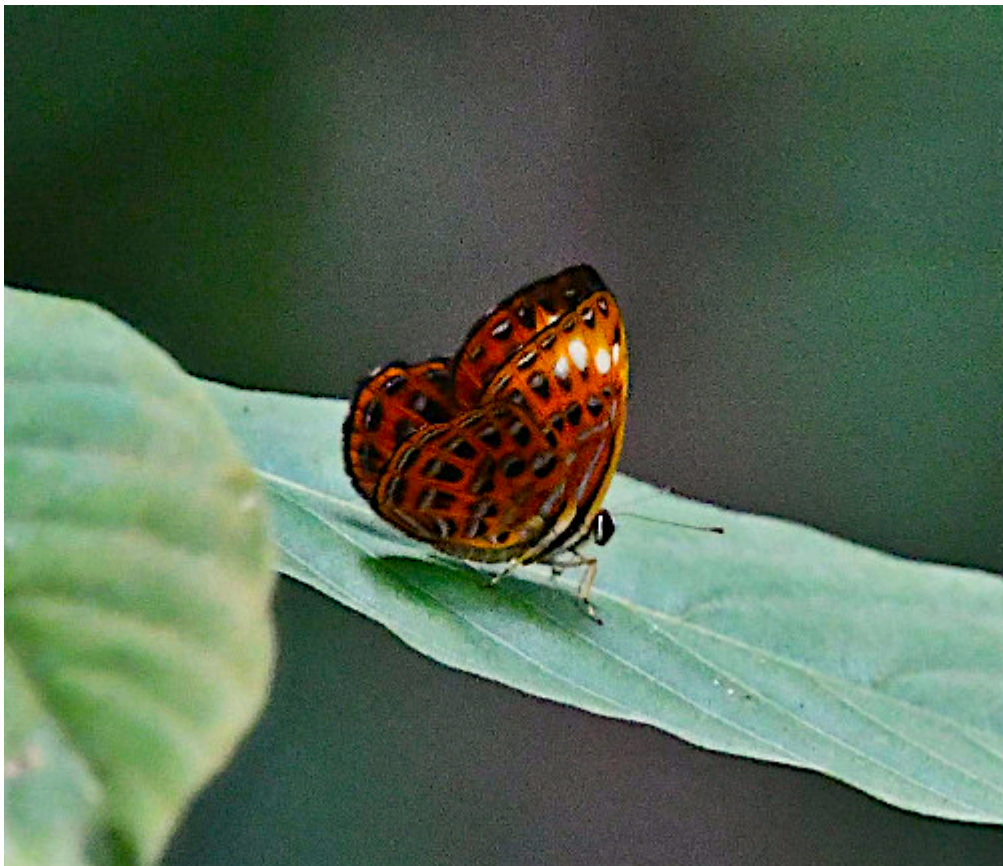
A battle weary-looking Red Edge.

A revisit to the second trail revealed a Grey Sailor (*Neptis leucoporos cresina*) and a few Purple Dukes (*Eulaceura osteria kumana*). This was followed by the sight of a female Saturn (*Zeuxidia amethystus amethystus*) perched quietly on the trunk of a tree drunk on its sap. Then much to our delight, we had a rare encounter of a Large Snow Flat (*Tagiades gana gana*) that had settled on a leaf along the main road.



Left to Right: Large Snow Flat & Saturn.

At the end of the walk, Simon tallied the number of butterflies sighted that morning. We were amazed by a total of 41 species in just slightly over three hours! Furthermore, most of them had been photographed.



Another butterfly sighted at Upper Seletar Reservoir that morning was this beautiful Lesser Harlequin.

Other exciting wildlife sightings that day included the Twin-barred Tree Snake (*Chrysopelea pelias*), a juvenile Wagler's Pit Viper (*Tropidolaemus wagleri*), a juvenile male Crimson Sunbird (*Aethopyga siparaja*) with emerging red colours, and a small Fairy Longhorn Moth (*Adelidae* sp.).



Clockwise from top left: Juvenile Crimson Sunbird, Twin-barred Tree Snake, Fairy Longhorn Moth.

It was certainly a morning to remember! What was most heartening was knowing that our butterflies are bravely hanging on despite the affliction of haze upon our skies and forests.